182 114 [15] [81] [84] *trice.*" Schebesta (1952, 42–43) also believes that the forest environment induces fear, suspicion, and guile, and limits the intellectual horizon of the Mbuti. Putnam is not entirely in agreement with this view. He regards Schebesta's archers as a particularly stagnant group, witnessed by the fact that they speak only one language, whereas nearly all other Mbuti speak several (Schebesta, as mentioned above, regards this factor as an indication of their purity), and also by their inadequate individual hunting technique, which, as Schebesta himself states (1933, 28; 1952, 100–101) contributes a bare third of their food and, he writes, renders them dependent on the villagers for plantation products. These remarks are not quite consistent with his statement that the exuberance of the vegetation assures these bands of gatherers a far more stable and sufficient diet than does the environment outside the forest (Schebesta, 1936b, 79; 1952, 42).

182 • 825 Putnam associates the lack of seasonal change with a general ignorance among the Pygmies of cyclical activities. For instance, the Mbuti, who observe every detail in their forest home, "are unaware that the aquatic larvae which they eat turn into mosquitoes, nor do they know that the caterpillar turns into a butterfly." [P.164-B]

[ARCHERS]

After giving birth, the mother keeps her infant 846
in the shade of her hut for three or four days,
receiving visits from admiring neighbors. The 854
infant is protected by various charms and [789]
amulets attached to its elbow and wrist. It is [853]
fed whenever it cries. When the mother does
leave her hut, carrying the infant on her back,
she protects it from the sun by covering it with
a leaf. When it is bigger she carries it without a
supporting sling, either on her hip or on her
back. The child is always with her, and she
devotes her spare time to playing with it and
singing to it. Even when dancing she may carry [535]
it in a sling at her side.

The child is taught to walk almost as soon as 856
it is big enough to be allowed on the ground
alone. This process is sometimes hastened by [825]
scratching its knee and placing a fast-moving
beetle (*pakalakala*) in the blood, then allowing
it to run away. Soon, the mother believes, her
child will be running as fast as the beetle.

Breast feeding is continued for about a year; 853
sometimes a child continues to be breast fed
while it is able to run about the camp. But from
a few weeks after its birth it is introduced grad-
ually to vegetable foods.

Fathers, although Schebesta writes that they 854
do not like to be bothered with infants, help 855
their wives in the care of children and even 593
attend to their personal needs.

[P. 178-D]

[ARCHERS]

776 192 184 on the contrary, tall, and wanders through the forest, striking the trees as he moves about. According to some of these central archers, the mother of Toré is Mato (Matu), who lives in the mountains, and his father is Pucho-pucho; according to others, his mother is Ou-ororo, and his father Ogbi-oro, names which, according to Schebesta's linguistic studies, contain the words 776 372 825 for fire and menstrual blood. The Chthonic God is, under many of his names, referred to as the original possessor of fire (as is the chimpanzee). Among the southern archers the pos- 776 184 sessor of fire is Mbali, and Bali is fire itself. These southern archers also regard Toré as lord of the world and creator of all things. For this [782] reason they make offerings to him of all their products from hunting and gathering. (In this region the term Lodi is replacing Toré.)

776 761 184 [825] All Efe agree that Toré sends death. The southern archers believe this because they disobeyed his command to refrain from following and spying on him. Others say that Muri-muri had confined death in a pot, which he gave to a toad with instructions to take the greatest care of it. But the toad gave it to a frog who leapt away with it and broke it, thus letting death escape.

[P 189-B]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

ation with fatality. Schebesta attributes this to a confusion of religion and magic, a confusion of Mbuti notions of God the Father with villager notions of the demon of the forest (for the villager, the forest is essentially evil). Costermans (1938) claims that Schebesta fails to take account of the essential difference between Toré and Muri-muri which he himself noticed among the central archers (above) but chose to ignore.

Schebesta believes that, though different groups of archers give precedence to one name or another, there is only one God of the Undergrowth, and he is universally associated with fire, lightning, storms, death, the rainbow (which frequently brings death), dreams, as well as with the good life of the hunter. The chameleon is the sacred animal of the archers, in rapport with the sky and the moon, the storm and lightning.

There is also a belief in *befe*, forest sprites, whose lord and master is Mbali or Kalisia. (The Lese and Mvuba use the term *lodi* for similar sprites, says Schebesta.) They are also called *toré mo-ichu*. They make their presence known by two sorts of sound: one lugubrious, portending death, the other auguring good.

Cult Practices

A number of practices are associated with the

[P. 189-D]

[ARCHERS]

The paramount symbol of death is the rainbow, whose representative is the python. The archers sometimes associate the rainbow with Matu, aged mother of Toré, the magic dancer who lured children to the forest never to return, or only to return demented. She is also the dreaded animal that hides among the rocks and kills passers-by with a glance. 761 776 821 [825]

The rainbow is associated not only with death but with sorcery, as is Matu and, according to Costermans, Toré. Like Matu it kills either by being seen by man or by looking at him. The archers, as do the net hunters, differentiate between the rainbow in the east and the rainbow in the west. (The Bira even name them differently.) [754]

Lightning is of lesser importance, being a mere work tool of God which can be used by him to bring death. It sometimes appears in the form of a bird. [825]

Totem and Taboo

According to Schebesta, the archers consider the clan and the lineage as indistinguishable. A clan may be entirely contained within a single 613 614

[Q 191-D]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[ARCHERS]

[P. 192-A]

613 hunting band, or, if the latter becomes too
614 large, both clan and band may split into two or more bands. The relationship of several bands or lineages as members of the same clan is generally designated by the use of a common name,
[621] ancestor, and totem. One band is distinguished from another, regardless of relationship, by individual territorial names, but apart from identity of ancestor and totem there is no effective structure binding together the clan, if dispersed. There is no clan chief, and no clan territory (except for a very small clan that happens also to be a hunting band). Even clan exogamy cannot be said to be rigidly enforced; the invariable rule, rather, is exogamy of the local lineage or hunting bands.

Totems are generally animals, rarely plants,
• [825] never natural phenomena. Schebesta cites the leopard and the chimpanzee as being the commonest totems. A man and wife observe each other's totemic restrictions in each other's presence or when with each other's group; simi-

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[ARCHERS]

Various rites and magical instruments are logically consistent with this notion: the *segbe* pipes that are able to deflect the storm, attract game, or defeat the enemy; the magic horn of the *maigwa* antelope that seeks out thieves; and the various charms and amulets used by hunters either on their bodies or on their weapons. Certain animals are reputed to possess an abundance of *megbe*, notably crows, crabs, the snake (*mageda*), the antelope (*maigwa*), the chameleon, the toad, and the tortoise.

According to various legends, menstrual blood is also possessed of magical force.

Opposed to *megbe* is *uda*, the force of black magic. As mentioned above, the archer accepts death as inevitable, the recalling by God of *boru e'i*, the life principle Schebesta translates as "soul." But death may be caused by sorcerers through the use of *uda*. *Uda* is associated with menstrual blood, and Schebesta compares this notion with the legends that explain one cause of death as being the curiosity or greed of woman. This second cause of death, through *uda*, is thus attributed to the "original sin" of woman, who from curiosity or greed violated God's laws or lured man to do so.

Costermans (1938) and Boelaert (1936a) both criticize Schebesta on this point, saying that the material does not justify his conclu-

[P. 192-D]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

224 method was known to Putnam, who says that a special spear, with a long wide blade of soft metal, is used (Fig. 40). The shaft is about 4 feet long and stout; the blade is carefully sharpened on a stone (as the Pygmy sharpens all his
• [825] blades). The hunter, who may make use of elephant droppings to cover his scent, tracks the elephant, approaches it silently up wind, and thrusts the spear as far as he can into the belly, just behind the ribs. Putnam says that the Pygmy then stands absolutely still (but presumably having jumped into the cover of the bush), and that the Pygmies themselves said that if you "as much as wink at this moment you are a dead Pygmy" (Putnam, 1948, 331). He may, if the opportunity offers, repeat this process. When he returns to camp the others examine his spear and decide, according to the distance the blood has reached down the blade, whether the wound is fatal and justifies tracking or not. If they decide the wound is fatal, the entire camp sets off, leaving only an old couple to look after the camp. They track the elephant for two or three days until it dies of peritonitis.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

race between Pygmies and chimpanzees to get 222
to it first. Pygmies say that chimpanzees, if they [325]
are already well fed, will take a fallen *ibambi*
and hide it in the fork of a tree, but an obser-
vant Pygmy will find it. The *eseli* nut is the [137]
most important of the nuts and is too tough for
chimpanzees to open, and the *itaba* is the most
important of the edible roots. Following the dry [221]
season comes the season of termites, and then
that of caterpillars. The honey season, however,
is the only season of real significance.

[P. 209-C]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

262 Lesser taboos are observed by children until they reach the age of puberty. These, according to the Pygmies themselves, result from the fact that a certain kind of food makes a certain child sick and thenceforth is taboo to it.

262 There are also certain food restrictions during periods of puberty, pregnancy, and mourning, and others emphasizing the opposition of the sexes. Putnam gives as an example the refusal [825] of men to eat frogs and toads, which women gladly eat, and suggests as a reason the association of the amphibians with water and land, and that they might bring about rainfall adverse to hunting.

Trade

439 As with the archers, great stress is laid by 177 Putnam on the present dependency of the net [184] hunters on the villager plantations for vegetable food, particularly the plantain. In principle the system is the same as that outlined by Schebesta. Putnam says that the relationship is interfamilial and inherited according to the principle of patrilineal descent. There is no strict account kept of trade, or any system of equivalent values other than mutual satisfaction. But the vil- [571] lager, if displeased, may withhold bananas, and the Pygmy, if not satisfied, may leave and go to hunt with another band attached to another patron. (Putnam uses the term "host.") When

[177] [1] Very possibly of village origin.

[P. 211-B]

1: Turnbull E-4, 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

ter. During this time the food was being cooked, and the women were still chattering, though shut up in their huts. After eating, and when all the women were silent, the serious singing began.

Final mention should be made of the coincidence of an *elima* initiation and a *molimo* meeting, described by Anne Putnam. It is the custom of the *elima* to sing through the night, as do the boys of the initiation during the *nkumbi*. When the women once found themselves rivaled by some men singing the "hunting" *molimo*, they competed but were sung down and finally gave up. As soon as the sounds of the *molimo* trumpet died into the distance, however, the women started up again. When it was a case of death, and serious *molimo* singing, the women offered no competition.

It is told by these Mbuti that in the old days the *molimo* was an animal that belonged to the women, and all the men had to run away every time they saw it. But then the men caught the

[1] Subsequently I saw many more meetings of the *molimo* association (1960b, 1961) and its two different aspects were clarified and reconciled.

[P 227-D]

[NET HUNTERS]

173 [p.228-A]
534 animal and since then no woman has been al-
825 lowed to see it.
562 Local villagers, who claim also to have the
171 *molimo*, are critical of the occasional joking at-
177 titude of the Mbuti and say that they, the vil-
534 lagers, call it out only when someone important has died.

POLITICAL LIFE

Authority

622 Putnam goes further than Schebesta with re-
888 gard to the existence or non-existence of chief-
tainship among the Mbuti. Primarily of the net
[623] hunters he writes, ". . . there are no chiefs, councils, or any other formal governing bodies in a pygmy camp" (Putnam, 1948, 334). There is respect, he says, for age and experience (*not* for "elders"); the opinions of the old and the wise are generally heeded. Any individual who shows disrespect for an old man, or who refuses to comply with any reasonable request, is abused by the others. Old men who are eccentrics are ignored.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

534 Normally, however, and when drums are not available, short resonant sticks are used. These are either smooth, giving a sharp hollow sound, or else they are split and shaved at one end to provide a totally different accompaniment. These sticks, handclaps, and leg stampings provide the rhythmic background to the dance.[1]

535 224 825 Mrs. Putnam has seen a dance in which a mask made from a leopard skin was used by the Mbuti. She also describes fully (1954, 296 ff.) a dance performed by them following the killing of a leopard. The body of the leopard is strung up to a branch or a tall stake. All the men, armed with liana whips and whips made from plaited antelope hide, gather around it. The men who are responsible for killing the leopard dance by themselves, approaching the stake. As they do so, they are attacked by the others, and have to fight their way to the leopard's body and cut it down, at which everyone gives a shout of triumph. In the

[1] It is most notable that for religious song and dance such is the only form of accompaniment, even if drums are available.

[P. 234-B]

Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

[P. 234-C]

dance observed by Mrs. Putnam the man who first speared the leopard was wounded but nonetheless took part in the dance. The other two men involved in the killing protected him as much as they could from their attackers and guarded him as he cut the leopard down. Onlookers said that he would not have been thought a coward if he had not taken part, because of his wounds, but he had chosen to do so. 535 224 825

Song, used in conjunction with dance, as described by Schebesta, also has a separate function and operates as an art form in its own right. This, at first, Schebesta (1933, 301) denied, but later (1936b, 27; 1948, 259) he conceded the greater importance of song over dance. Among the net hunters there is a very clear division of song into four main categories, each of which can be distinguished by style and technique alone, and a fifth subsidiary category of play songs. The main categories are, as briefly mentioned above (p. 213), religious songs and secular songs, each subdivided according to sex, i.e., songs of the men's 533

I: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

The dividing line between magic and religion, according to Putnam, is even more difficult to draw with the Mbuti than with other people. His notes, however, do not attempt any analysis. The only other available information on cult practices is a few isolated descriptions in Mrs. Putnam's notes. These, except for the description of burial, are given in the section on Magic (p. 239).

Death and Afterlife

There is hardly any information on the notions of the net hunters on life after death, except that they firmly believe that life continues in some form or another, in much the same way that it is lived by the living. There is some indication, both from Mbuti informants and from the legends collected by Mrs. Putnam in the Epulu District, that the net hunters believe that when a body dies, a vital part of it, the personality or soul, leaves. It may become either a forest sprite (*satani*), or it may go to some other place where it will have nothing further to do with the living. In either case it will live much as it lived before—hunting and gathering, dancing and singing. *Satani*, however, can die, whereas there is no death in the more remote spirit world.

The net hunters believe that death is caused by the water animal that is the rainbow that is, sometimes, the python. It is not clear whether

[P. 238-B]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

[P.239-A]

821 flames will not be seen, then the lightning will
372 pass. Mrs. Putnam reports that on one occasion a particularly large and bright fire was built during the night because, according to the Mbuti, a Lese woman who had died recently was "tapping in the trees." Fire is reported to be extinguished in one of the *molimo* dances, among the net hunters as well as among the archers.

Totem and Taboo

614 Putnam distinguishes four kinds of taboo for
825 the net hunters. The first is related to what he calls the clan totem.[1] Each clan, he says, has its own private totemic animal. This is believed to be not the clan ancestor but, rather, connected with that ancestor in mythology, as having rescued him from danger or helped him in some enterprise. Putnam mentions seven species of antelope and 12 species of monkey that appear as totemic animals among the Mbuti bands in his area. Other animals, not important as food to the Pygmy, are also totemic animals but, according to Putnam, less frequently. Slow game and vegetables, that is, food collected by women, are never used as totems.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

614 Rules concerning the clan totem vary, in theory and practice. Its flesh may never be eaten by members of the clan and, as far as possible, the animal is avoided—alive or dead. If the clan is dispersed, its seceding factions tend to forget their own totem and adopt the totems of the dominant clans in whose areas they settle, evidently, in fact, effectively changing clan affiliation.

784 562 [262] The second kind of taboo mentioned by Putnam is the sex taboo symbolizing the differences in male and female activities. Women and children eat frogs and toads; men refuse to touch them. As mentioned above (p. 211), this difference is probably connected with the association between these amphibians and both water (portending disaster) and land (the hunt).

• [825] [823]

784 The third type of taboo is the taboo applicable to times of crisis in the life cycle—puberty, pregnancy, and mourning. At such times certain taboos are observed, but they vary from band to band, and there is no detailed information.

262 Lastly, Putnam mentions the existence of

[1] By "clan" Putnam means a patriclan or gens.

[P. 239-B]

1: Turnbull E-4, 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

[P.239-C]

personal taboos, which simply involve the decision of individuals to abstain from eating certain foods. These may be the result of some near disaster involving the taboo animal, or the result of some physical allergy. Many personal taboos are acquired during puberty, but they can be acquired any time. During puberty a taboo may be "given" to the individual on the decision of his relatives who observe that he has an allergy to a certain food; or they may be, and at other times always are, acquired by personal volition. Porcupines, snakes, and slow game not used as clan totems are subject to personal taboo.

These forest animals that symbolize clans, sexes, and individual idiosyncracies, says Putnam, are personified by the Mbuti, who believe that they used to be able to talk and were on an equal footing with human beings.

Thus the totemism of the net hunters seems to be very different from that described by Schebesta for the archers, among whom there was neither sex nor individual totemism (p. 191). Further, Putnam denies that there is any belief, at least among the net hunters, in totemic ancestral spirits such as the *lodi* described by Schebesta. There are *genii loci*, *satani* who inhabit well-known caves, ravines, or hills, but Putnam says that these are not associated with clans.

554 881 The fact that men go through the not inconsiderable beating inflicted on them by the women in order to gain admission, without ever taking advantage of the young maidens then available to them, is another indication of the function of the *elima* in determining male status.

555 224 [439] Male status depends primarily on skill in the hunt; this may be deliberately acquired by individual exploits such as elephant hunting. Among certain bands elephant hunting is a specialized profession, the ivory being used for trade. Among the Epulu net hunters it is not so. It is an exceptional occurrence and, as described by Anne Putnam (1954, 143 ff.), may be undertaken without any thought for the food or ivory, at times when the band has no need of extra meat or of trade with the villagers. On this occasion the Pygmy hunter admits that he was frightened. He describes how he killed the elephant simply because he felt compelled to do so. This compulsion may have arisen in part by [825] virtue of his reputation as a great hunter, and in part from constant opposition between the human world and the animal world, and the constant effort of the Mbuti to assert the superiority of the former.

224 825 This latter aspect was also witnessed in the ceremony described by Anne Putnam (1954, [P. 247-B]

[P. 247-C]

296 ff.), following the killing of a leopard. The dead leopard is tied to a stake, which is surrounded by the men, armed with liana whips and plaited hide thongs. The hunters involved in the killing of the leopard perform a dance, in the course of which they have to fight their way through to the stake and cut down the carcass of the leopard they have already killed once. In the instance cited the most prominent of the three chief actors had been wounded by the leopard but insisted on taking part though his fellows said that none would call him a coward if he did not. The other two men protected him from the attackers and guarded him as he swung his spear and cut the leopard down. The cutting down is acclaimed by all with a shout of satisfaction. Unfortunately the information does not carry essential details such as which of the men or how many of the band held the leopard as their totem, or as to what relationship, kinship or otherwise, existed between participants in the dance. Possibly the ceremony is propitiatory, but from the information on totemism among these particular Mbuti it seems unlikely. It rather appears as a formal opposition between the human and the animal worlds.

224 825 • [535]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P. 264-A]

539 best-intentioned of Pygmies. It is worth noting
577 here that we find an almost exact parallel in the
539 way these legends deal with the animal world,
577 in which cleverness is the supreme virtue. Leg-
825 ends extolling cleverness among Pygmies must not, then, necessarily be taken as supplying a model for behavior in Pygmy society, but rather as showing how satisfactory relationships can best be established with the animal world. This has much wider implications, as we shall see below.

One of the tales of cleverness tells how a young Pygmy becomes a great hunter, not by killing game by himself, simply, but by killing it with trickery. In such legends the great ideal of the Mbuti seems to be to match the animal world in its own terms. But in other Mbuti legends they rely on aid from the animals to help them in their trickery.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

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825 Two men went to their camp. While they were walking through the forest they came across a tree called *pusia*, which bears delicious nuts. One of the men gathered nuts from this tree, but the second man gathered from another tree, bearing very bitter nuts. When they reached their camp they roasted their nuts over the fire. The man with the bitter nuts offered them to his friend, who tasted them and said, "Oh! These are terrible, I can't eat them." The two of them shared the sweet nuts.

Later on, the man with the bitter nuts went back to the tree and stole the rest of the sweet nuts and roasted them over the fire. When they were ready he offered them to his friend. His friend tasted them and said, "These are sweet; they must be my nuts. You have stolen my nuts." "I wouldn't steal your nuts!" "Well, tomorrow I'll go and see."

At first light, the man who had found the sweet nuts went to his tree and saw that all the nuts were gone. He returned to the camp and told his friend what he had found. "You see, you did steal all my nuts. You can stay here no longer."

So the man who stole the nuts left the camp and went through the forest until he came to a *konga* bird. When he saw the *konga* bird, he explained what had happened and said, "Please don't kill me." The *konga* bird said, "All right, you can stay here and look after us." In the meantime, the other Pygmy, his nuts all eaten, decided to follow his friend. When he finally arrived his friend said to the *konga* bird, "There is my brother whose sweet nuts I stole. You can kill him if you like." So together, they killed the Pygmy who had allowed himself to be tricked.

Basi

000 As might be expected, cleverness is frequently

[P 264-B]

1: Turnbull E 4.5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P·264-C]

As might be expected, cleverness is frequently associated with smallness. In several legends the whole purport is the superiority (in this respect) of small animals over large. It is not difficult to identify the smaller, clever animal as the Pygmy, nor the larger, more clumsy, and stupid animal as the villager. Already we are on the fringe of a borderline world. The animal and the human worlds are related with regard to this quality of cleverness, or trickery, a quality that seems to be essentially animal rather than Pygmy. By cultivating this quality, by imitation, the Pygmy is able to establish a relatively satisfactory relationship between the two worlds. But "cleverness" also brings the Pygmy into relationship with the spiritual world. It is through cleverness, for instance, that he is able to thwart the trickery of the forest *satani*.

539 828 825. [186]

Old age, with its greater store of experience, connotes cleverness to the Pygmy. Old people are regarded as possessing a special abundance of this quality, which automatically associates them more closely with the animal and spiritual

539 828 577 888

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

539 Early in the morning the old woman woke up, and
577 she was very, very angry to find that her family had
888 deserted her again. So she stood on her head and she
732 walked and walked and walked, until she caught up with them, walking on her head. She told her son how bad he was. She was very cross indeed. Her son went off into the forest and gathered some honey. And then he got a very bad worm and put it in the honey. He returned to the camp, and said: "Don't be angry with me, mother. Look, I have brought you some fine honey." And the legless old mother ate up the honey, worm and all. And the worm ate up the legless old mother's stomach, and the legless old mother died.

Butuwa left and went to another camp where they had relations. When they got to the camp, their relations asked: "What news; where is your mother?" "Oh! She died," said Butuwa. "That's too bad," said the others.

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3. Legends Dealing with Relationships to the Supernatural

Above, we see animals appearing in connection with the quality of cleverness and how an excess of this quality can break through the flimsy barrier between the natural and the supernatural world. Here we consider the large number of legends in the collection in which animals appear with almost exclusive reference to their supernatural quality. Some legends

[P. 265-B]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P. 265-C]

seem to deal with relationships between animals as animals. But, even with these, we can suspect that there is some hidden meaning that is not clear to us, until we know more about these Mbuti or, indeed, that may not even be clear to the Mbuti themselves. Here is such a tale:

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825 •

There was once a chimpanzee and an elephant. The chimpanzee took bugs out of the elephant's hair. When he had finished he said to the elephant, "Now, you take the bugs out of my hair." So the elephant took out bug after bug after bug. He pulled harder and harder, and finally he pulled so hard that he pulled the chimpanzee's head right off. When the elephant saw what had happened he ran away. He went to his cousins in their hole. He said: "I have done something awful; I have killed a chimpanzee." His cousins said: "Really? Tomorrow we shall go and see."

The next morning they all left the hole. They saw the dead chimpanzee and said, "What shall we do with the body?" They decided the best thing was to let it rot there. So they let it rot, and they went back to their hole.

Basi

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

Most of the tales, however, deal with relationships between the animal and the human worlds. Some of these relate how Pygmies and animals become friends—almost. This corresponds to a mutual sympathy that the Pygmies seem to believe exists between them and the animals that share the forest with them, but, however much they may both try to meet, it can never quite be done. 539 825.

An elephant and a Pygmy were friends. The Pygmy was called Mbali. He went to visit his friend, the elephant. When he arrived at the elephant's village, the elephant was delighted and said to his wife, "My friend, Mbali, has come; make us a nice dish of mashed plantains." So his wife pounded the plantains, added salt, and put the dish over the fire. When it was ready the elephant took some red-hot embers and held them to his feet, and the elephant fat ran into the food. When there was enough he turned to his friend, Mbali, and said, "Eat well." The two of them sat down and ate up all the food. The Pygmy said, "This is delicious." He went back to his camp.

The next day the elephant said to his wife, "Now I will go and visit my friend, Mbali." So he cleaned himself up and set off. When he arrived at Mbali's camp, Mbali saw him and called, "Welcome, friend! Come and sit down." He told his wife that his friend had come, and that she should prepare some mashed plantains for him. When it was cooked the Pygmy took some red-hot embers and started putting them

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539 to his foot. The elephant said, "Don't do that, it will
• 825 kill you. My feet are big and heavy, let me do it."
"Don't be silly," replied the Pygmy, and put the embers to his feet. He screamed with pain and almost died. The elephant took hold of him and brought him back to life, then said, "See, I told you it would kill you." The elephant then took the hot embers and put them to his feet so that the oil ran out into the plantains, and they all sat down and ate.

When the meal was finished the elephant returned to his home. His wife greeted him and asked if he had had a good time. He said: "It was terrible. My friend, Mbali, took red-hot embers and put them to his feet and almost killed himself. I shall never go back there again, never."

Basi

Relationships with chimpanzees are less happy. The Pygmy and the chimpanzee seem to be just about equally matched in cleverness, and they are continually killing each other. Typical is the tale of the Pygmy who sat down to watch a group of chimpanzees playing.

One of the chimpanzees noticed the Pygmy and came over to him. He said, "What are you doing here?" He called to his brother chimpanzees, "Come and see this Pygmy." They came over and said,

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539 "We'll fight him." One of the chimpanzees grabbed
825 at the Pygmy, but meanwhile the Pygmy had taken up his spear. The Pygmy killed the chimpanzee. The others said, "What did the Pygmy kill our brother with?" And one answered, "It seemed to be with the root of a tree." So another of the chimpanzees gathered up the roots of the trees and threw them at the Pygmy. The Pygmy killed him with his spear. The remaining chimpanzees sat down and tried to puzzle this out. One of them searched all round and found the spear. He took it and killed the Pygmy. The chimpanzees then gathered some leaves and put them over the Pygmy. They all left.

The Pygmy's brother went to look for him. He found him dead, covered with leaves. He said, "What could have happened? Who killed my brother?"

Basi

539 Leopards and turtles are tricky animals that
825 teach the Pygmy much of his cleverness in leg-
828 end. They appear frequently, and it is always their cleverness and trickery that are stressed. But here we consider another aspect of these
539 animal tales. Not only is it always their clever-
825 ness and trickery that are stressed, thus auto-
828 matically associating them with the supernatu-
186 ral, if only indirectly, but they are often identified with villagers. In talking of villagers, in legend, more often than not the Pygmy gives them animal form. The villager is very defi-

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nitely not included on the human side of the opposition between the animal and human worlds (the villager is often associated with an excess of cleverness). A frequently heard motif is for a Pygmy to wound an animal with a spear or an arrow. The animal escapes, carrying away the weapon. Later, the Pygmy discovers that weapon, covered with blood, hidden in the house of some Bira villager. The Pygmy then knows that he had, in fact, wounded a villager who had changed into an animal. 539 825 186 (828)

The collection includes one very similar legend in which exactly the same motif is used, accounting for enmity between two Pygmy hunting groups. A Pygmy wounds an elephant with a spear, and the elephant escapes, carrying away the spear. The Pygmy's father sends his son off to look for the lost spear. On his way through a village, he meets a Bira who says he has seen the spear in the hut of the Pygmy's best friend, another Pygmy. The Bira helps to conceal the unfortunate hunter in his friend's hut; at night, when his friend is sleeping, he

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searches and finds his spear. But, as he is escaping, he is seen by other Pygmies who say, "Oh! So it was you who tried to kill our brother; we will kill you." 539 825 186

In the ensuing fight the elephant hunter kills all the other Pygmies and returns to his father who is well satisfied.

The Bira villagers frequently turn into elephants and take advantage of their great size to make war on the Pygmies, destroying the forest as they do so. They are bad enough at the best of times, in Pygmy estimation, but apparently they become elephants when they are particularly bad.

A Bira and his wife had a terrible fight. The wife decided to leave and go to her mother's village, but her husband followed her. And as he followed, he turned into an elephant. He crashed through the forest and destroyed everything in sight. His wife heard the great noise and climbed a tree. The elephant tracked her down and started to knock the tree down. He charged at it and tore at it, but try as he might he could not pull it down. His wife held on tightly. Then she called to the Pygmies. The Pygmies heard her and came to her rescue. When she saw them she told them to kill the elephant. They attacked it with spears. They speared it again and again, but it would not die. It charged at the Pygmies and drove them back, right back to the Bira village. There the elephant spoke and said, "You have tried to kill me, your friend, a Bira." The Pygmies replied:

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539 825 186 "But you have turned into an elephant and tried to kill your wife. Because of that you must cross over to the other side of the river and die." The elephant said, "You want to kill me?" "Yes," said the Pygmies. "You have become a very bad elephant." So the elephant went across to the other side of the river. The Pygmies went back and took his wife to her mother.

Basi

539 825 We next examine some of the legends that very definitely attach supernatural attributes to certain animals and birds. There is a legend that warns against annoying porcupines. A Pygmy that tries to smoke some porcupines out of their hole is attacked, driven into another hole, and turned into an animal. Similarly a pangolin, if annoyed, has the power to drag its tormentor down into the world of the ancestors, through a great hole in the ground.

But some of the strangest tales concern birds. Above is an account of the *konga* bird that helped the Pygmy who stole the sweet nuts to kill his brother. Another, unidentified bird is popular in legend—the Bird with the Beautiful Song. It sings the most Beautiful Song that the Great Forest has ever heard.

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One day, a Pygmy child heard this Beautiful Song and searched for the Bird that could sing so wonderfully. He found it and praised its Song. The Bird flew down and perched on the boy's head, and the boy brought it back to the Pygmy camp. His father saw the Bird and praised it. When it sang he told the boy to give it some food. The Bird then flew off. The next day the boy heard the Song and searched until he found the Bird again. Once again he brought it back to the camp. This happens three times, and the last time the father takes the Bird from the boy and says, "Now you go off and leave me. Leave this camp and go away to another; go! go!" The young Pygmy left his father and went to another camp. When he was alone, the father took the Bird, the Bird that sang the most Beautiful Song that the Great Forest had ever heard, and he killed the Bird. And he killed the Song.

And no sooner had he killed the Bird than he himself dropped down dead, completely dead, dead forever.

Basi

Another curious bird is *fifi*. Like the legend of the Bird with the Beautiful Song, the legend

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of the *fifi* is told with great awe by the Mbuti; it is reproduced here in full. 539 825.

There was once a poor Pygmy girl. She was crippled, and her skin was full of disease. She was only about eight years old. The Pygmies were breaking camp. Nobody was willing to carry the little cripple for fear of catching the disease. So when all the Pygmies had left the camp, the little girl was all alone, by herself. She cried and she cried and she cried. And when night fell she crawled into her empty hut and she cried herself to sleep.

At daybreak she heard a sound like: "Pip! Pip! Pip!" It was the bird called the *fifi* bird. It had fastened a long rattan vine between two trees, and it was sitting on the vine swinging back and forth, back and forth. The little girl went to look more closely, and the bird flew away.

In the distance there was a Bira villager with his hunting trap. Seeing the diseased cripple he came up and said: "My poor child, you have been left here all by yourself . . . I must kill you." And he took his knife and lifted it to kill the girl. But the knife caught his nose and cut it. It killed him and he fell down dead. The girl caught hold of the rattan vine, and she swung herself back and forth, back and forth. 539 825 186

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As she was swinging on the vine, another Bira villager, seeing the movement, came slowly into the clearing. "What is this?" he said to himself. "Why, it is a crippled little Pygmy girl. Get off your vine swing, my child, and come over here to me."

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The girl got down from her swing and made her way over to where the Bira was standing. Then she sat down on the ground and held her withered little legs. "Come nearer, my child," said the Bira, reaching forward. "No! No! I can't come any nearer," cried the girl. "My legs hurt so much, and I am all diseased." "Very well, I shall kill you," replied the Bira. "Oh, please don't do that, I'm only a poor deserted child." "But why did your father leave you all alone?" asked the Bira. "No, I must certainly kill you."

And he took a piece of wood and tried to strike the little crippled Pygmy girl. But the wood flew back in his face and hit him on the nose, and the blood streamed down. With the blood still streaming down he ran back to his village and told everyone: "There is a poor deserted Pygmy girl in the Pygmy camp. She is crippled and diseased, and she has the evil eye. She will surely kill us all." And with some friends and relations he hurried to the deserted camp.

There was the little girl, sitting on the swing, swinging herself back and forth, back and forth. The Bira called to her: "Come here, my poor child. You have killed one of our relatives, and you have wounded me. You are crippled and diseased, and you have been deserted. I am going to kill you."

The little girl got down from her swing and slowly

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539 825 186

came over to where the Bira was standing. "Come nearer, little one!" said the Bira. "Oh, please don't kill me," said the Pygmy girl, "I am only a deserted cripple, and I haven't run away." But she came closer still. The Bira raised his knife. "Now!" he said," "Now, I am going to kill you!" But the knife caught in his stomach, and he fell down, he fell down dead.

The girl went back to her swing, dragging her withered little legs along the ground. And she climbed on the swing and swung herself back and forth, back and forth. The remaining Bira all hurried back to their village.

"Come! Come! Come, all of you!" they cried. "There is a crippled little Pygmy girl in the deserted camp, and she will surely kill us all unless we kill her. Get your spears, and come!" And all the Bira villagers seized their spears and came running to the deserted camp. They all came to take their revenge and kill the deserted little Pygmy girl.

But the girl had gone.

The only sign of life was the *fifi* bird, and the *fifi* bird was sitting on the rattan vine, swinging itself back and forth, back and forth, back and forth.

Basi

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538 promptly deserted as being unsafe company. So
181 we might gather that in daily life normality is
183 the ideal, and, when the supernatural (including animals, regarded as possessed of supernatural powers), is dealt with, cleverness is dominant.

538 From the second section of legends we can
888 finally glean some information from the treatment of old age. Two things emerge: first, old age is associated with extra cleverness, approaching trickery; second, we find Pygmy realism emerging again when old age is accompanied by disability. Either way, old age is a dangerous condition. In this particular band it is perhaps significant that the leaders of the group are not old, but are the active—the "great hunters."

538 Animals, like food, enter into the majority of
• 825 legends, and in some cases they seem to be regarded merely as animals. But more often the trickery of the animal is emphasized and, consequently, its association with the supernatural. In the third kind of legends, those dealing with the supernatural, we find animals in almost every one.

538 almost every one. We also find villagers.
538 Throughout, the legends are interesting in their
186 revelation of the Pygmy attitude to his villager
• 825 neighbors, but nowhere more so than when the villagers appear as elephants, profane elephants desecrating the sacred forest. At times the Pygmy regards the villager as stupid (in matters concerning everyday forest life), but at others the villager is associated with the excess of cleverness that we call "trickery," and then he belongs in either the animal or the supernatural worlds—certainly not in the Pygmy (human) world. This notion is one that we might usefully transpose from the legendary world to the world of reality. Just what is the Pygmy's relationship with the villager?

538 Here I wish to draw attention, at the risk of
181 appearing repetitious, to the constant opposi-
771 tion we find in the legends between the natural
772 (Pygmy) world and the supernatural, the normal (reasonable) world and the world of trickery. In his everyday life the Pygmy is also faced with an opposition between two real (in our sense) worlds—his forest world and the world of the villager. No two worlds could be more dissimilar. The villager is afraid of the forest; he believes it to be full of darkness and evil. One of the most striking points brought out by a study of these legends is the absence of any concept of evil (in the sense of conscious

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[P. 271-C]

rainbows, of streams where strange things happen, of birds and beautiful songs. (It is also, oddly enough, a world of vine swings.)

However one might quibble about the meaning of the term "evil" and its applicability to animals and villagers, it most assuredly seems to have no place at all in this last world, any more than cleverness or trickery. We return again to the value of normality. We have a fusion of the normal and the supernatural that is difficult to grasp, but in which, I believe, lies the key to the magico-religious system of these Mbuti. It is difficult to determine the exact significance of the part birds play in the legends in the last section, but there is no doubt that the Mbuti associate them in some way with what I am now forced to call the "supernormal" world, that unknown world that lies beyond death. To conclude, I would like to refer to the legend of the Bird with the Beautiful Song, which I mention above.

The curious thing about this legend, and the many variant forms in which the theme is repeated, is the emphasis on the song. Sometimes the narrator sings; these are rare moments that are not easily forgotten and far less easily ex-

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[For information on personification of "forest" as Provider, on reification of "forest" as a single mighty being or force to be placated, and on projection onto forest of both man-like emotions and impersonal supernatural power and sanctity: see 778.]

It is also possible to see Mbuti scrounging food from villagers other than their own *kpara* and, when not successful, simply stealing what they want. If they are caught they are scolded by their *kpara* and that is generally all. If more fuss is made than that, all the Mbuti are likely to pack up and return to the forest within hours. But whatever Mbuti may be seen engaged in whatever activity, they can be seen only as individuals in relationship to a particular villager at that particular moment, unrelated to other villagers and other Mbuti, unless they are included in the same activity. Only in the village camp of the Mbuti, usually at the edge of the plantation, do they form a society, but the interpersonal relationships observable even in a village camp bear little resemblance to relationships in the more strictly village context.

The situation becomes more understandable in light of the expressed Mbuti attitude to their own place in the village world. They refer to the village as being a place for good hunting and good eating. Hunting requires cunning, and particularly when dealing with a "tricky" animal such as the villager, say the Mbuti. The word for "trickery" means more than "clever," it has connotations of supernatural power. So the Mbuti, when hunting in the village, use appropriate tactics, just as they do in the forest. Carrying wood and fetching water, building houses and pounding manioc, are all part of those tactics, and may perhaps be likened to the net with which the Mbuti trap the forest animals.

This Mbuti attitude to the relationship not only fits with the theory that there is, in effect, no necessary economic interdependence, but it also fits well with the suggestion of *apparent* structural incompatibility. Mbuti talk of "eating" the villagers, and indeed the villagers also talk, with some asperity, of being eaten. In Mbuti thought, however, it is rather more literal than it may seem, for the villagers are not only referred to as animals, a common term of abuse, but they are considered as animals. And when one eats an animal one merely consumes its substance, one does not thereby assume its form or its pattern of behavior.

Even supposing that there was a necessary economic interdependence, the daily life of the village in no way reveals any sense of economic urgency. Even in times of crisis, such as the cotton harvest, powerful chiefs like Kachui may evidently find themselves deserted by the Mbuti and forced to make out on their own. But if there were a true economic dependence, then there would have to be a workable economic system, with an associated system of social control; and

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though he expected as much. Rather more serious is a medicine called, in the Epulu district, *anjo*. It is a paste made from the heart, brain and eyes, sometimes from other parts as well, of some highly prized game. The paste is charred and placed inside the horn of that animal, which is then inverted and stuck in the ground, usually near the family hearth. The paste is put on the body, most often the forehead, of the hunter and of members of his family. Sometimes it is even offered to privileged friends. It is believed to convey to the hunter the senses of the animal so that he will be able to deceive the animal as well as foresee his movements. However, the use of this individual magic is considered antisocial in many bands, particularly if it appears to be attended by success at the cost of others in the band. It may cause disputes, and then generally all such medicine is collected and burned.

By far the most significant magico-religious acts connected with the hunt are more of the order of religion than of magic. One is the hunting song (with or without dance), and the other is the hunting fire. The song or the dance may precede or follow a hunt. It is distinct from any other form of song or dance. The song form is rather complex and demands co-operation in a manner comparable to that demanded in the hunt itself. The dance is suggestively imitative of a successful hunt, but is by no means mere mime. Like the song form, the choreography is quite distinct, and is not used in any other context.

The hunting fire in the southern part of the net-hunting area takes the form of a fire lit near the trail just before the hunt sets out in the morning. It is generally lit by youths, always at the base of a young tree. When blazing it is covered with leaves, so the heavy smoke is given off. Men and women, as they pass by the fire on their way to the hunt, may stop to gossip, or they may pay no attention. I have not seen or heard of any accompanying ritual or invocation, the only explanation ever stated being that the fire is to rejoice the forest, and it would seem to have the same primary purpose as song and dance, that of attracting the attention of the forest. It is certainly believed that the fire will insure the protection of the Mbuti and help toward success in the hunt.

Further north, another form of hunting fire is used, associated with rather more ritual. There the net-hunters build the fire within the camp, whereas in the south it is always just outside. The fire is sur-

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it, the children standing guard at the net or at the fringes of the hunt), nonetheless the nuclear family is divided in the hunt, and both men and women are forced to co-operate with their neighbors, who may or may not be kin. The hunt above all is not an individual affair but involves the band as a whole, as is borne out in the ultimate disposition of the spoils.

That the net-hunt is regarded as a matter of importance to the forest, regarding the forest in a religious sense, is evidenced by the hunting fire, the song and the dance, rather than by any elaborate ritual, purification, or sexual taboo. The close relationship between the hunt as an economic activity and the hunt as a religious act is seen in the widespread custom of rubbing ashes from charred forest woods into the skin, sometimes slitting the skin first to achieve permanent tattoo marks. This is stated to secure the protection of the forest.

Whereas I was never able to secure confirmation of Schebesta's description of food offerings being made to the forest, except through villager informants, there is very definitely a strongly felt and stated urge to use every part of the animal, and never to kill more than is necessary for the band's needs for the day. This in fact may be one reason why the Mbuti are so reluctant to kill an excess of game and preserve it for exchange with the villagers. There is no expression of joy in the capturing and killing of an animal, though the excitement still runs strongly. The moment of killing is best described as a moment of intense compassion and reverence. The fun that is sometimes subsequently made of the dead animal, particularly by the youths, appears to be almost a nervous reaction, and there is an element of fear in their behavior. On the other hand, a bird caught alive may deliberately be toyed with, its feathers singed off over the fire while it is still fluttering and squawking until it is finally burned or suffocated to death. This again is usually done by youths who take the same nervous pleasure in the act; very rarely a young hunter may absentmindedly do the same thing. Older hunters and elders generally disapprove, but do not interfere.

The respect seems to be not for animal life but for the game as a gift of the forest, and a gift that may be withheld if abused by waste. It is further considered that good hunting is essential to the success of either an *elima* or a *molimo* festival, and during such festivals certain hunts are devoted expressly to supplying the festival with food.

Among the archers, the system of sharing game and the respect for game are comparable in their political and religious connotations:

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contains from three to six families. In the same way that among the net-hunters the smaller camps built during the honey season show rather more evidence of patrilineal bonds, so do the smaller archer camps. They are still by no means exclusively patrilineal-patrilocal units however, and although respect is paid to the lineage head, it is no more than would be paid to any elder. Indeed, even the small camps are frequently composite to an extent that lineal authority would be unworkable. As we shall see for the net-hunters, authority is widely dispersed through the different age groups, for different activities.

The archers make use of the dog to a far greater extent than do the net-hunters, who only use it incidentally (particularly elders who go off on their own with bow and arrows). The common practice is for three or so hunters to lie in wait, possibly concealed up in trees, near an animal trail. They will entice game with antelope calls, and shoot at it when it has come between them. Dogs are used more by single men or men hunting in pairs, who prefer to track rather than to ambush. Women do not participate in the hunt, and go off on their own, but never singly, to gather.

If one such minimal section of the band is not having successful hunting or gathering, its first step will be, as with any hunting camp, to abandon the site and move elsewhere. However, with the territory split up among a number of similar sections, the freedom of choice is not as great as among the net-hunters, where the band is encamped as a single unit and may move anywhere else within the territory without hindrance. Consequently one section may join temporarily with another. Alternatively, it may send to another and ask for a share of their spoils. Generally, however, contact between one section and another is more for purposes of socialization, as the forest is no less abundant here than in the region of the net-hunters, and the same axiom holds good—a hungry camp is a lazy camp.

Each section is free to move where it will and cannot claim any right to any particular subterritory, and although it happens, it is considered bad form to camp too close to another section without asking permission simply because they have found good hunting. It frequently happens that hunters from different sections find themselves hunting in the same area between their two camps, and in that case they either separate or else they join up, depending on the nature of the game present.

The presence of elephants may be made an occasion for two or more

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sections to join together temporarily, and the archers share the same two techniques of elephant hunting that are used by the net-hunters. Some hunters like to make a kill on their own, not so much to gain status, for such status is virtually meaningless, but for personal satisfaction. They will trail an elephant, then run up underneath it and jab their spear several times into its belly, aiming at the bladder. If they see urine spurt out they know the elephant will die in a day or so, and they will return to their camp, which will pack up and trail the dying elephant and build a new camp around it.

Alternatively, four or five Mbuti will lie in wait, and when an elephant appears one will stand out on the trail in front of it so that it stops. At that moment one who is concealed behind will run out and slice the tendon of one of the rear heels. The elephant will spin around, partially immobilized, whereupon another concealed strategically will run out and slice the other tendon. The elephant can then be killed at leisure, though still not with ease.

The killing of an elephant will inevitably bring other sections of the band to the scene, and the meat will be shared among all. The moment it is finished, however, the band will again split up and remain this way for the rest of the year. Thus the *begbe*, during the honey season, remains the only time when the band assembles as such for the purposes of acting together as an economic unit. It is unlikely that more than one elephant will be killed during the year; the maximum I know of in one territory is three, and this was considered highly exceptional. Further, although elephant hunting may result in the assembly of a number of sections, or even of the total band, it does not involve communal activity.

Neither the archers nor the net-hunters, despite the abundance of wildlife around them, acknowledge many totemic restrictions, though they could well do so without suffering. But the very abundance also renders it unnecessary to have institutionalized methods of insuring even distribution. Among the villagers, whose supply of meat depends almost entirely on the Mbuti and is consequently unpredictable and erratic, totemic observances are common and rigidly enforced, and can be seen to affect distribution to some extent, as the totemic animals include those most frequently caught.

Such totemic observances among the Mbuti that do not derive from individual allergies are associated with membership in the patrilineal lineage. The animals so respected are without exception those least frequently killed, hunted or eaten. By far the most wide-

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spread totem is the leopard, and even those who do not have the leopard as their clan totem, and can therefore lawfully kill the animal, say they would never eat the meat. Some give the reason that the leopard eats human beings, and in this way anyone eating a leopard is also eating human flesh. Whereas insofar as clans themselves are suspect as being possibly of village origin, so are the totems, and indeed totemic observance itself. But there is no doubt that the leopard is throughout the forest considered by the Mbuti as having supernatural connotations. More of this will be seen when we discuss the *molimo*, the men's religious association, which is active primarily at the time of death of a member of the hunting band. The derivation of the term is unknown, and it has no translation, but *moli* is the word used by the same Mbuti for the leopard. The animal is considered beautiful because of the grace of its movements, and in this context it is likened to a dancer. It is respected for its power and skill as a hunter. It is feared for the way it brings death, to animals or human beings, swiftly and silently and inevitably. There are many who do not claim the leopard as their totem, but who nonetheless would not even touch a dead leopard, let alone kill one or eat it.

The chimpanzee and the buffalo are probably the next two most commonly given totems, and they are also animals that have the least possible interest among Mbuti as a source of food. The chimpanzee because, they say, it is nearly human, and the buffalo simply because it is such bad eating. Other Mbuti who may eat these animals seldom do. Buffalo is tough and unpleasant-tasting, they say, and is eaten only if there is nothing else. Also, any sensible Mbuti will seek to get out of a buffalo's way rather than to challenge and kill it. There is no merit in killing a buffalo, as there is in killing an elephant. To seek one out is considered a foolishness, the mark of a stupid and conceited hunter. To be attacked by one and to escape are considered a sign of good luck; if the buffalo is killed in defense, however, that only brings incidental fame. If, as sometimes happens, a buffalo is constantly making a nuisance of itself in a particular part of the territory that cannot always be avoided, and presents a real danger to hunters and gatherers, then five or six of the great hunters will set out to kill it, with considerable trepidation. It is above all an animal to be avoided for every possible practical reason.

The chimpanzee, on the other hand, is avoided for more personal reasons, largely associated with its semihuman appearance. Someone who does not like to eat chimpanzee will also be likely to refuse to

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eat any monkey. Sometimes older men will eat chimpanzee, and this seems to be more so among the archers than the net-hunters. Certainly, chimpanzees are more likely prey for the archer than the net-hunter.

Other animals stated as clan totems are similarly either undesirable for good practical reasons, or so rare that their exclusion is of little practical significance.

Restrictions sometimes cited as "totemic" by the Mbuti, and which include the more common and desirable game, have proven in my experience to be not totemic at all, but due to personal allergies. Any food that makes a child sick will be forbidden to it until it grows older. At puberty (i.e., when he or she is old enough to participate in the *elima*) he may try that food again, and either continue the restriction or abandon it, according to the results. Again at marriage he may try it. From then on he is unlikely to make any further attempts, though nothing is to stop him. There are plenty of alternatives, and exchange on grounds of taste is about as frequent as economic sharing. There is certainly nothing hereditary about such restrictions.

Apart from this, the Mbuti make ample use of the game offered by the forest. Their technology, limited by the same environment to nets, bows and arrows, spears and vine snares, is more than adequate for their subsistence. Perhaps some measure of the sufficiency of supply is the fact that little effort is made to tap the more difficult sources of food, such as the fowl and monkeys that throng the upper branches of the trees. An even more surprising rejection of a much easier source is the rejection of fish. Fish of many kinds fill the forest streams and rivers, and are caught with the utmost ease, yet they are considered as food fit only for children.

On the other hand certain ants, termites, snails and grubs are considered as delicacies and eagerly sought, though these are probably more properly considered under gathering.

GATHERING

Gathering among both net-hunters and archers is similar, and although primarily the concern of the women, there is no shame in a man gathering any vegetable foods he may come across. The gathering of termites, grubs and so forth is equally practiced by men and women.

The foods most commonly gathered for daily consumption are

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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out the liquid that drains from it (*kombo*) is caught in leaf cups and drunk. Never is any honey wasted, never is it kept or used in the preparation of other foods; what is not consumed on the spot is eaten or drunk the moment it is brought back into camp.

There is a craving for honey during the season that never seems to be satisfied. No amount of alternative foods, even meat, can reduce this passion for honey. Each band has its own way of listening for the telltale sound of bees swarming. Among some, a leaf is rubbed between the hands, which are then rubbed across the forehead to enable the hunter to see the bees high up in their hives. I found this practice among the eastern archers. Elsewhere, throughout the net-hunting region and also among the western archers, at least, the chameleon (*ameuli*) is believed to lead the Mbuti to honey by uttering a long-drawn-out throaty cry. Chameleons, however, are not known to be capable of making any such noise, and the noted ornithologist Dr. James Chapin claims to have tracked this weird sound down to the *Sarothrura elegans*, a bird with a skinny pouch in its neck that enables it to give an unbroken wail lasting fifteen seconds or more.

But most noticeable among a people who take the success of hunting and gathering so much for granted is the presence of honey-collecting magic, and an inordinate emphasis on song and dance, legend-telling and other recreational activities. There is no doubt that whatever else it may be, the honey season is also a festive season where celebration is the order of the day, even at the cost of a relatively empty stomach.

Some activities are purely recreational, such as spinning tops made of nut sections, and gambling with dried seeds thrown on the ground to make up a total number that is a multiple of four. Others are educational, and in particular the honey swing is for training youngsters in agility at heights, as are the informal contests at climbing dangling vines. The honey swing is suspended from two high branches, so that it has a long, powerful arc. The youths line up and one jumps into the bend of the vine that forms the seat and sets the swing in motion. As the swing moves backwards, a youth runs forward, catching onto the side of the vine, giving it added momentum. As it carries him off the ground, he throws his legs forward and up over his head and into the swing just as the previous occupant jumps to the ground.

The younger children also play with smaller swings, and they have their own game of climbing saplings until there are so many of them that the young tree bends to the ground. The children then leap to

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

village itself was being pressed by the administration to increase its productivity at the same time that it was being pressed to supply the administration with more labor. In turn the villagers tried to press the Mbuti into supplying them with more food. Accustomed to a bare subsistence economy, the Mbuti could never quite see the necessity, nor did they altogether feel it was right or that it would be pleasing to the forest. Their belief, as far as I could determine, was not so much that they would be punished by the forest, but rather that the hunt would "be closed," that they would not get the unlawful surplus, that they might not even get enough for themselves.

To counter this the villagers offered divers kinds of medicine[9] for use in the forest, and agreed to make even more powerful medicine in the village. Sometimes the villagers offer to come into the forest, with a ritual specialist, to make medicine. The Mbuti tend to allow this, as it is profitable to them. Occasionally, however, the habit lingers, and whether or not *anjo* was originally a village or an Mbuti custom, it is now considered as a village trick, and disliked as such. *Anjo* is made by taking an antelope horn and filling it with a paste made from special parts of the antelope, charred black. This paste is then applied with a stick to the body of the hunter, to convey to him the senses of the animal.

This custom could sit perfectly well among the archers, where hunting is on a more individual basis. But among the net-hunters its use was taken as a sign of desire for personal gain above communal gain. On one occasion, when the hunting was not particularly good, *anjo* horns were rounded up from all over the camp, eight in all, and destroyed in the central fire. There was some protest from the owners, but not much. It was generally agreed that this made everyone the same, and that was how things should be.

From all the above, and from the rest of the disputes recorded in my notes, totalling 124, not counting the petty daily squabbles of no apparent import other than as an indication of bad temper, one of the most significant features is the small number of cases in which any

[9] Among these medicines is that encouraged by the Arab slave traders in search of ivory, specifically to give success in the elephant hunt. Known as *esumba*, *ishumba*, and divers other spellings, it is sometimes confused with a love medicine of the same name, and even more frequently with the *molimo* of the Mbuti, the word *esumba* or *lusumba* being used to describe the Mbuti *molimo* when speaking in KiNgwana, language of the Arabized Bantu tribe. It is perfectly possible that the two practices became intermingled, both, from the Mbuti point of view, being concerned with the pleasure of the forest.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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of honeycomb pressed down above it. Two sticks are prepared in this way by a hunter, and when the cloth is set on fire the hunter waves them both in the air. He then hands each of them to a youth, and the two youths run through the camp and out into the forest around the camp. The womenfolk clap loudly until the youths return and rather unceremoniously put the sticks down near the central fire.

The honey dance also separates the sexes, the women pretending to be bees, men the honey gatherers. Yet another separation, symbolizing the power of the women, is the medicine that is said to attune one's hearing so that one can hear the larvae wriggling in the honeycombs, high up in the trees. A woman prepares a stick which, when blown through, produces a misty spray. She blows into the ears of all the men. The men say that the bubbling noise they hear is the sound of larvae and grubs eating honey, and that it will guide them to the hives.

There is seldom any doubt as to where honey lies, and it is plainly the social rather than the economic importance of the honey season that is being celebrated. This is most clear in the great *angbe* medicine, in which the age groups are further differentiated and which includes attention to orientation that is quite unique in my experience (this, together with several other features, is so singular that it cannot be adequately explained at the moment, but is nonetheless described for its intrinsic interest).

At the *kuma'ngbe* (hearth of honey), a number of youths chop a special *tembu* wood into kindling (the only time I have ever seen kindling prepared). Four hunters supervise. The four hunters then put their honey axes down in the hearth, blades to the center. One of the hunters lines the axes up so they align with the cardinal points of the compass. This done, each hunter takes his ax and draws it toward him, cutting a trench along that line. In this way four trenches, two feet long and three inches wide and deep, are cut. In the center a square is cut so that the four corners indicate the intermediate compass points. The position of the sun is consulted to insure correct alignment.

A senior hunter has meanwhile cut four lengths of *teka* vine, carefully bound so that its juices do not escape. He removes the binding and allows the juice to fill the center square, after which water is added to fill the trenches. The combination of juice and water is said to be *mota*, or powerful. Each vine is laid in a trench, projecting at the extremities. Two youths then take out the vines and shake them

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 PO4 Pygmies PO4
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Mbuti creations. But however much they enlarge upon the power and horror of the evil spirits, they always show that the Mbuti are not without power themselves, and the spirits are every now and again defeated and killed by Mbuti trickery. This confirms the village belief that the Mbuti are in fact in league with the spirits; just the fact that they coexist in the same forest is cited by many villagers as evidence of their affinity.

I cite two legends here (the KiBira versions of the same legends told by the same Mbuti are given in Appendix I), both of which show Mbuti ambivalence at its height. The first describes an Mbuti band in a village context (in a plantation) and pointedly refers to a myth that the Mbuti had bananas before the villagers. This is not generally believed to be true, but it is a way of expressing the undoubted prior occupation and ownership of the forest by the Mbuti. In this legend the Mbuti are threatened by a quasi-real enemy, the elephant. Elephants are indeed destructive to plantations and sometimes to Mbuti camps, but here, as seen at the end, the elephant is also a symbol for the villager (who is also destructive in his act of cutting down the forest). To rid themselves of the elephantine menace the Mbuti invent a story about evil spirits, making use of the knowledge that the elephant is basically stupid. When describing the elephant's fear of the spirits, the narrator comments, "Their fear was empty" (*"bachei ba bo"*), "for elephants are like villagers" (*"bambongu bua sopila-batu"*). The legend significantly ends with the promise that the narrator and his family will live happily forever after, but for "happily" the word *kobia* (more often, *ekimi*) is used. It means "quietly."

LEGEND OF THE MBUTI PLANTATION

In olden times we Mbuti had bananas before the people of the village. The people of the village stole bananas from us. We shared together, we Mbuti taking the leaves and the villagers taking the roots. They tricked us this way.

Our plantations of old were good, but the elephants used to bother us a lot. They killed many plantations. The Mbuti said, "What shall we do? The elephants are bothering us so much and are killing our plantations."

An old man, very old indeed, said, "When the elephants come again, we shall talk with them." The youths said, "What will you say?" The old man replied, "You shall see, children."

[see page 291 re Appiru]

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

539 186 825 245 The elephants came. They began to kill all the bananas. They began to completely kill the plantation. The youths ran to the old man and said, "Oh, Father, the elephants have come again and are killing our plantation." [The old man said], "Good, I shall go and chat with them. All of you stay here, completely quiet."

The old man went to the plantation. He cried and cried. He threw himself on the ground. The elephants looked at him and said, "What thing is this? The youths have not come to chase us away, only an old Mbuti and he just cries. It is good, we shall eat quietly."

They ate many bananas, and the youths remained completely quiet in the camp. The old man cried greatly, "Oh, my children, all are dead. Oh, my children, where are they?"

The elephants heard, and said to the old man, "Why are you crying like that? And where are the youths? We shall eat up all the plantation." The old man replied, "Eat, eat it all. My children are all dead." And he continued crying.

539 186 825 245 796 The elephants said, "But you have many children. How did they die?" The old man said, "It was an evil spirit, very evil indeed. He walked with two spears.[2] He was very fat, like you. Every day I sent someone to cut bananas and the evil spirit ate him. Now he has eaten all my children. He said it was his plantation and that he would kill everyone who came here. Oh, my children have all died emptily. Why did the evil spirit not bother some other plantation, why did he curse mine?" He cried greatly and he left.

The elephants said, "Ha! If a spirit that bad has cursed this plantation, we should go somewhere else. Let us go quickly, before he kills us!"

Because elephants are like people of the village, and they are afraid of evil spirits. But they are afraid emptily. They went far. The old man called all his children and said, "Now the elephants will not come back. They think this is a place full of bad spirits. Thus we shall remain quiet. It is our plantation. Nobody else will bother us."

539 186 829 Although the scene is the plantation, thus asserting their claim to the plantations of the villagers, the Mbuti plainly are really referring

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[2] Evidently a feature that to the Mbuti conveys a real fear of or respect for the supernatural, for in the morning rampages of the *molimo*, in its role as judge and when seeking Mbuti who are committing the crime of sleeping during the singing, the hunter acting the part carries a spear under each arm. See also in the second legend cited, where a spirit wanders through the night with two firebrands, which is the way in which the entrance of the *molimo* trumpet into the camp is often marked.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

ful analysis by competent musicologists.[6] As described, the above divisions represent divisions recognized by the Mbuti, and visible in differences of musical form. There is sometimes an additional category stated, that of the elephant-hunting song, which seems to overlap both the ordinary hunting song (specifically referred to by the Epulu Mbuti as a net-hunting song) and the *molimo* song. In view of the possible elephant symbolism in the *molimo* festival, this could be of importance, though not enough is known at the moment of the elephant-hunting song to properly assess its position in the system. In this respect it should also be remembered that the Ngwana term *esumba*, or *lusumba*, frequently used by the Mbuti in the forest context as synonymous with their *molimo*, was originally for the Ngwana in the nature of elephant-hunting magic.

All songs share the same essential nature, sharing the same power of sound. The sound "awakens" the forest, in Mbuti terminology, and the nature of the song indicates the particular area of interest of the Mbuti at that moment, thus attracting the forest's attention to the immediate needs of its children. It is also of the essential nature of all songs that they should be "pleasing to the forest."[7]

Rather more magical in nature, perhaps, is the way the Mbuti use other forms of sound than song. A sudden noise of any kind is considered "strong," and generally bad; an isolated hand or arm clap, or a single loud shout, will bring complete silence to a camp or to a hunt. Whistling is considered very "strong" indeed, but here the word

[6] It is interesting to note here the elephant-hunting significance of the Ngwana *esumba* ritual, and the linguistic confusion between *esumba* and *molimo*. Frequently, I have seen in the forest the remains of what seems like the model of a spear-fall, and have always been told that a *molimo* had been held there. Most often such sites were in old, deserted camps, once or twice (particularly in archer territory) on the trail.

[7] Pahlen (1949) gives an excellent general background to the primitive concept and use of music, though his acceptance of the sounds of nature as symbols of supernatural powers is not demonstrated. He points out (p. 18) how in ancient cultures music went hand in hand with religion, "the synthesis of wisdom, beauty, kindness and solace." He is referring primarily to countries with "highly developed cultures," but much of what he says is applicable to primitive society. It is certain that an acute analysis of Mbuti music would reveal much that parallels the structure of Mbuti society. The extraordinary level of polyphonic achievement is surely related to a highly developed individualism that would hardly tolerate the confines of unison. The Mbuti musical categories of *herai* and *imiai*, chorus and solo song, indicate a system of recognized relationships between the group and the individual, and the technique of *hoquet*, already mentioned, further mirrors social relationships. Such considerations, however, should not obscure Pahlen's major point that music also mirrors social values. It is an analytical tool, requiring little musical training, that has been much neglected by anthropologists, and it is hoped that a systematic analysis of Mbuti music now being undertaken at Columbia University will provide data from which not only may further light be shed on Mbuti society, but from which may emerge the beginnings of an ethno-musicological methodology.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

"strong" has the same double meaning that it has when used to describe song. In using either the Ngwana term (*nguvu*) or the Bira term (*mota*), the Mbuti may imply difficulty as well as sheer physical strength. A sudden noise that is *mota* has an inherent power of its own. A song or whistle has power only if it is properly performed. The proper performance is not so much the following of a prescribed pattern, though there may be and usually is such a pattern, if general, but rather the transference of *pepo* so that by contact with *pepo* the song or the whistle becomes *mota*. Singing or whistling not so touched with *pepo* is "empty noise," and doubly bad. Whistling is widely used to arrest action of any kind. In everyday life, whistling brings the movement of all hunters and beaters to an immediate stillness and stops all sound among them. The sign for them to continue is an imitated animal cry. In the camp, if someone thinks he hears a foreign sound—of approaching people or game, of a "crying" tree (a tree starts creaking some days before it falls, and this is referred to as "crying")—he whistles to call for silence so that all may listen and hear. During the *molimo* songs, particularly, but during any song, also, whistling softly brings the song to an end. A sudden storm is likely to bring shrill whistles, though nobody claims to even hope for them to stop the storm, though they all say it is worth trying. They explain that whistling is effective in other realms because it is the affair of the Mbuti, but it will not stop a storm because that is the affair of the forest.[8]

All such whistling is done with the lips. Whistles are also made of seeds and carved from wood, however, and though the seed-whistles are purely for children to play with, the wooden whistles (*piki*, *segbe*) have special usages. Rarely, a small whistle may be attached to a net, and although functional it is never blown. Similar whistles are used by those net-hunters who build a hunting fire in the camp, and are placed within the vine circle surrounding the fire, again not blown. Larger whistles made of two semicylindrical sections of wood and bound together by vine or *nkusa* twine, tapering to a point at one end (left open so it can be stopped with a finger) and notched for blowing at the other end, are sometimes attached to a fur cap worn by hunters, and may be blown before the hunt, possibly during a hunting dance. Similar whistles made of *angbe* wood, from the *angbe* tree that provides most of the honey, are used during the honey season

[8] Cooper (1941, 24 seq.), in drawing comparisons between the Semang, Andamanese, and Eta, finds much similar interest in noise.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

"to call the bees" (in the sense of attracting their attention, not of summoning them). The belief is that these whistles will halt the game or the bees, so that they may be found more easily.

All such whistling, whether by lip or by *piki*, is done by men. Women rarely whistle, though they may do so to the same end as the men. If they do, it is considered all the more *mota*.

It could easily be explained by the Mbuti that the sound itself paralyzes the animals or the bees, and has this direct effect (and could so be more properly called magical), but they deny this strongly and say that the forest hears the *piki* and leads them to the bees or the game (or alternatively that the forest holds the bees and the game still for its children to find them).

In ordinary conversation, sounds are widely used to convey different ideas, a snap of the fingers indicating that the action being described was done suddenly, a high-pitched, drawn-out exhalation indicating it was done slowly. Wherever possible, the narrative is illustrated by imitations of the sound of the action described. Vowel sounds, unformed into words, are used in conversation similarly to heighten ideas, convey added emotion, to supply an element that would otherwise be missing and which is plainly of great importance to the Mbuti. For the forest is nearly always full of sound, and the Mbuti refer to this constant background by saying "the forest is talking" (*ndura a lufu*). The Mbuti listen, and interpret, and make use of what they hear. If the forest stops "talking," then it is a sign that something is very wrong and alerts the Mbuti to imminent danger.

It is not surprising, then, that sound so carefully controlled as song should be considered as *mota nengo, mota ngbekbekbei*, the "strongest" possible kind of sound, activated by the breath that is so mysteriously connected with *pepo*. Song is used to communicate with the forest, and it is significant that the emphasis is on the actual sound, not on the words. Frequently the mere vowel sounds are used, sometimes imitative of animals, birds or bees but more often simply to suit the melodic line of the song. When words are used they are most often trivial, and may be spontaneous and highly sketchy references to one or another event of the day. That the song is directed at the forest, and intended to awaken the forest, is most clearly seen in the *molimo* festivals, which are the Mbuti reaction to crisis. The *molimo* is named for the festival, for the society that performs the festival, and for the central and solitary piece of paraphernalia, the trumpet that echoes the song of the Mbuti on into the depths of the forest.

[P.308]

THE LEGEND OF THE MBUTI PLANTATION

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mosa besu bambuti subua'ini eboko. mosa ma batu banji.
In olden times we Mbuti had bananas, before the people of the village.

batu banji baku biai eboko ndasu. su kangia'i.
The people of the village stole the bananas from us. We shared them.

besu bambuti sukonia ekasa, bakpara bua'i poko. Seyuma mayeli bendo.
We Mbuti took the leaves, the *kpara* took the roots. That was their trickery.

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samba ndaso nde mosa bindanza. akini bambongu pikiai dongasu.
Our plantations of old were good. But the elephants came and troubled us.

basudongia'isu. ba bumia'i tiko su.
They troubled us. They killed our plantations.

bambuti balufa'i, "su samabo? bambongu basu dongibé, babuniasu tiko ndasu."
The Mbuti said, "What shall we do? The elephants trouble us so and are killing our plantations."

mangesé, mangesé mangbo, alufa'i, "bambongu bapiké su lufua nabé."
An elder, a very old man indeed, said, "When the elephants come again, we shall talk with them."

bachahwa balufa'i, "ue semabo?" mangesé a lufa'i, "ue sipa, bamiki."
The youths said, "What will you say?" The old man said, "You wait, children."

bambongu bakidi. bawanji a lea'eboko bokbu. ba wanjia'i buna tiko.
The elephants came. They began to eat the bananas. They began to destroy the plantation.

bachahwa bache'i aka mangesé, balufua'i, "ombo, epa, bambongu bkidi; ba bunia tiko ndasu."
The youths were afraid and ran to the old man, saying, "Oh! Father, the elephants have come; they are destroying our plantation."

"ndanza. me mua ka totiambino. beningbokbu mu likana; nekobi anenengo." mangesé a ke a'i na tiko.
"Good. I shall go to chat with them. All of you stay here, completely quiet." The old man went to the plantation.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

a kamia'e nengo. engbue na dodo nengo. bambongu ba li sipi.
He cried greatly. He threw himself on the ground. The elephants looked at him.

balufu, "nde'i'i? bachahwa kabapiki dongasu, paka mangesé a piki ngamo nde ndanza sulea kobia nasu."
They said, "What is this? The youths have not come to trouble us. Only an old man has come. Good, we shall eat quietly."

balea ebokosu, bachahwa bakobia nengo apa.
They ate many bananas, the youths stayed very quiet in the camp.

mangesé a kami, "Ah! bamiki bamo bau. Ah! bamiki bamo buma?"
The old man cried, "Ah! my children, all are dead. Ah! my children, where are they?"

bambongu ba'oki, balufu'aka mangesé, "angbe ue ka mi? bachahwa buma? su lea tiko bokbu."
The elephants heard, they said to the old man, "Why are you crying like that? The youths are where? We shall eat the whole plantation."

mangesé a lufu, "lea, lea ngbokbu. bamiki bamo baku." a kami.
The old man said, "Eat, eat everything. My children are all dead." He continued crying.

bambongu balufu, "akini ue mua bamiki si angbe e'ebaku?"
The elephants said, "But you have many children, how did they die?"

mangesé a lufu, "nde keti, keti ma phele'a. a tambi na kongé ebaré nde bia nengo, sawa na ue.
The old man said, "It was an evil spirit, very evil indeed. It walked with two spears. It was very fat, like you.

"siku bokbu, me mengia na'u kapié eboko, keti a mua'e, a nia'e.
"Every day I sent someone to cut bananas, the evil spirit killed him, it ate him.

"makati i'o'elea', bamiki bamo bokbu. a siainbende nde tiko nda'e, batu bakidié, e muangbokbu.
"Now it has eaten all my children. It said it was its plantation and whoever came it would kill them all.

"ah! bamiki bamo baku bo'u. angbe'e keti kadongimbe tiko ndetina?
"Ah! My children have all died emptily. Why did the evil spirit not trouble some other plantation?

"angbe a loki tiko ndamo?" mangesé a kami, a ke.
"Why did it curse mine?" The old man cried, he went away.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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bambongu balufu, "Ah! akini keti nde sinana, a loki tiko ndamané, su bua ka komanda; suke umana, kabe su mua."
The elephants said, "Ah! But if the spirit is that bad, and has cursed the plantation, we had better go elsewhere; let us go quickly, before it kills us."

gunde bambongu bua sopilabatu bananji, bache'i baketi bobo.
Because elephants are like people of the village, they are very afraid of spirits.

ba ke, ba ke, kurahwa. mangesé e oki bamiki bokbu.
They went, they went very far. The old man called all his children.

a lufu, "bambongu ka ba piké noma. ba bia sisia kuma keti masinana.
He said, "The elephants will not come back again. They think this is a place full of bad spirits.

"su likia kobia nasu tiko ndasu.
"We shall remain quietly in our plantation.

"batu betina bunda basudonga."
"Nobody else will bother us."

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

Anyone who has stood in the silent emptiness of a tropical rain forest must know how Stanley and his followers felt, coming as they all did from an open country of rolling plains, of sunlight and warmth. Many people who have visited the Ituri since, and many who have lived there, feel just the same, overpowered by the heaviness of everything—the damp air, the gigantic water-laden trees that are constantly dripping, never quite drying out between the violent storms that come with monotonous regularity, the very earth itself heavy and cloying after the slightest shower. And, above all, such people feel overpowered by the seeming silence and the age-old remoteness and loneliness of it all.

But these are the feelings of outsiders, of those who do not belong to the forest. If you *are* of the forest it is a very different place. What seems to other people to be eternal and depressing gloom becomes a cool, restful, shady world with light filtering lazily through the tree tops that meet high overhead and shut out the direct sunlight—the sunlight that dries up the non-forest world of the outsiders and makes it hot and dusty and dirty.

Even the silence is a myth. If you have ears for them, the forest is full of sounds—exciting, mysterious, mournful, joyful. The shrill trumpeting of an elephant, the sickening cough of a leopard (or the hundred and one sounds that can be mistaken for it), always makes your heart beat a little unevenly, telling you that you are just the slightest bit scared, or even more. At night, in the honey season, you hear a weird, long-drawn-out, soulful cry high up in the trees. It seems to go on and on, and you wonder what kind of creature can cry for so long without taking breath. The people of the forest say it is the chameleon, telling them that there is honey nearby. Scientists will tell you that chameleons are unable to make any such sound. But the forest people of faraway Ceylon also know the song of the chameleon. Then in the early morning comes the pathetic cry of the pigeon, a plaintive cooing that slides from one note down to the next until it dies away in a soft, sad, little moan.

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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Congo-Kinshasa FO1

THE WORLD OF THE FOREST

There are a multitude of sounds, but most of them are as joyful as the brightly colored birds that chase one another through the trees, singing as they go, or the chatter of the handsome black-and-white Colobus monkeys as they leap from branch to branch, watching with curiosity everything that goes on down below. And the most joyful sound of all, to me, is the sound of the voices of the forest people as they sing a lusty chorus of praise to this wonderful world of theirs —a world that gives them everything they want. This cascade of sound echoes among the giant trees until it seems to come at you from all sides in sheer beauty and truth and goodness, full of the joy of living. But if you are an outsider from the non-forest world, I suppose this glorious song would just be another noise to grate on your nerves.

The world of the forest is a closed, possessive world, hostile to all those who do not understand it. At first sight you might think it hostile to all human beings, because in every village you find the same suspicion and fear of the forest, that blank, impenetrable wall. The villagers are friendly and hospitable to strangers, offering them the best of whatever food and drink they have, and always clearing out a house where the traveler can rest in comfort and safety. But these villages are set among plantations in great clearings cut from the heart of the forest around them. It is from the plantations that the food comes, not from the forest, and for the villagers life is a constant battle to prevent their plantations from being overgrown.

They speak of the world beyond the plantations as being a fearful place, full of malevolent spirits and not fit to be lived in except by animals and BaMbuti, which is what the village people call the Pygmies. The villagers, some Bantu and some Sudanic, keep to their plantations and seldom go into the forest unless it is absolutely necessary. For them it is a place of evil. They are outsiders.

But the BaMbuti are the real people of the forest. Whereas the other tribes are relatively recent arrivals, the Pygmies have been in

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182 the forest for many thousands of years. It is their world, and in return for their affection and trust it supplies them with all their needs.
182 They do not have to cut the forest down to build plantations, for
824 they know how to hunt the game of the region and gather the wild
• 825 fruits that grow in abundance there, though hidden to outsiders. They know how to distinguish the innocent-looking *itaba* vine from the many others it resembles so closely, and they know how to follow it until it leads them to a cache of nutritious, sweet-tasting roots.
[821] They know the tiny sounds that tell where the bees have hidden their honey; they recognize the kind of weather that brings a multitude of different kinds of mushrooms springing to the surface; and they know what kinds of wood and leaves often disguise this food. The exact moment when termites swarm, at which they must be caught to provide an important delicacy, is a mystery to any but the people of the forest. They know the secret language that is denied all outsiders and without which life in the forest is an impossibility.

181 The BaMbuti roam the forest at will, in small isolated bands or hunting groups. They have no fear, because for them there is no danger. For them there is little hardship, so they have no need for
[141] belief in evil spirits. For them it is a good world. The fact that they average less than four and a half feet in height is of no concern to them; their taller neighbors, who jeer at them for being so puny, are as clumsy as elephants—another reason why they must always remain outsiders in a world where your life may depend on your ability to run swiftly and silently. And if the Pygmies are small, they are powerful and tough.

174 How long they have lived in the forest we do not know, though it is a considered opinion that they are among the oldest inhabitants of Africa. They may well be the original inhabitants of the great tropical rain forest which stretches nearly from coast to coast. They were certainly well established there at the very beginning of historic times.

THE MAKING OF CAMP LELO

In the middle
of the day the sun found its way through the leaves and struck this 133
bank, and the women liked to wade out to it and do their washing [296]
there. When the river was as low as this you could wade all the way
across, if you knew where to step, but at other times a huge fallen
tree was used as a bridge.

On the far side the ground rose sharply, and though at first the [137]
forest was still open and friendly, as soon as you reached the top
of the rise it became thick and closed in around you, and the only
paths were those made by animals, narrow and twisting.

Kenge showed me all this with his chest puffed up with pride. [312]
He told me I could drink water from any of the streams or from the
Lelo itself; it was not like living in the village where both the food
and water were dirty. He showed where the women would bathe, 515
and warned me to keep upstream of the shingle bar, so as not to 834
offend them. The other youths had already stripped naked and were [123]
splashing in the water, unashamed, though in deference to an over-
clad Westerner they held their hands in front of them when they
turned to face me.

We went back to the campsite and Kenge started clearing the 554
ground. Very shortly afterward three of the great hunters arrived— 361
Njobo, the killer of elephants; Masisi, the proud father; and Many-
alibo, the gruff, good-humored conservative. They shouted a greeting
as they came into the clearing, and looking around they threw down
their hunting nets where they thought they would like to have their
houses built. Njobo chose to be just to the south of the hillock; [605]
Manyalibo and Masisi, good cousins that they were, put their nets
down beside each other, opposite. Then almost immediately they 224
disappeared into the forest, each in a different direction, each with
bow and arrows. In less than fifteen minutes Kenge, who had been
examining the tracks of a huge buffalo that had passed by the night
before, suddenly stood still and motioned me to be quiet. With his [825]
hands he mimed an antelope running and pointed into the forest
behind Manyalibo's chosen site.

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behind Manyalibo's chosen site. Almost immediately there was a shout from Njobo, and Kenge bounded across the camp, picking up a hunting net as he went. Not more than fifty yards away we found Njobo standing, tense, at the end of a fallen tree, peering inside the hollow trunk. Masisi and Manyalibo came running up through the glade, and taking the net they quickly put it up around the tree trunk, while Njobo hurried off and returned with his spear.

Looking into the black, gaping hole I saw two eyes, glowing bright red and unblinking, staring at me from the darkness. Njobo had seen a *sondu*, a highly coveted kind of antelope, and had cornered it in a sharp bend of the river so that it had been forced to take refuge in the tree trunk, trapping itself. All this had taken place so silently that only Kenge's sharp ears had picked up the noises. When the net was firmly fixed Manyalibo stood on the tree trunk and thrust a long stick inside, keeping himself well clear of the opening. The forest antelopes have small but sharp horns, and when trapped they are vicious and dangerous. The sondu, snuffling with anger and pain, came bolting out so fast that it tore the mesh of the net. It lay there struggling and bleating, but only for an instant. All three hunters were on top of it, and two of them held it down while Njobo cut its throat with the blade of his spear. He looked up at me happily and said, "This is going to be a good camp, for the forest has given us meat before we have even built our houses."

Within another fifteen minutes the first of the women arrived. They had heard the thunder and had hurried, traveling (as they can when they want to) as fast as any man, in spite of the loads on their backs and the children on their hips. They were singing as they strode into the camp with long, graceful steps, and, just as the men had done, each cast a quick look around and chose a spot where she would build a house for her family. Njobo's wife, pretty young Masamba, was among them. She went to where Njobo had put his net, threw down the load from her back, and without stopping

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and very shallow. For the first time we slowed to a walk and stepped through the bubbling water, lifting our feet high so as not to splash. The forest was silent now, except for the evening chorus of crickets and frogs, and on the far side of the stream we halted while Ausu and Makubasi looked around and listened, to reassure themselves that we were alone.

I had no idea of how far we had come or in what direction, but I knew we had left the camp far behind. It was the first time I had known a group of Pygmies to be so silent. Normally, unless hunting, they are deliberately noisy, but now, just at the time that leopards would be prowling about in search of food, they seemed unwilling to disturb the forest or the animals it concealed. Just the opposite, in fact. It was as if they were a part of the silence and the darkness of the forest itself and were only fearful lest any sound might betray their presence to some person or thing *not* of the forest.

They stood there, quiet and still, and it struck me with a sudden shock that not one of them carried a spear or bow and arrow. As they peered into the dusk and cocked their heads first on this side then on that, satisfying themselves that we were really alone, it seemed that they felt themselves so much a part of the forest and of all the living things in it that they had no need to fear anything except that which was not of the forest. One of them said to me, later, "When we are the Children of the Forest, what need have we to be afraid of it? We are only afraid of that which is outside the forest."

We stood there, water from the stream still running down our legs, until they were satisfied that all was well. Then Makubasi nodded to Madyadya and to another boy. They ran on ahead, and after a whispered discussion two others followed. The rest of us walked slowly on until we came to a small clearing nearby, the far side of which was only just visible as the last glimmer of daylight dwindled away into blackness. We stood there waiting, saying nothing. Ausu and

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765 534 123 177 I asked, keeping my voice low, how it was that for the molimo, which was so sacred to them, they should use water piping stolen from roadside construction gangs, instead of using the traditional materials.

Evidently now that they had the trumpets in their possession there was no longer any need for silence, for they answered calmly and loudly with a counter-question. "What does it matter what the molimo is made of? This one makes a great sound, and, besides, it [322] does not rot like wood. It is much trouble to make a wooden one, and then it rots away and you have to make another."

[825] [533] Ausu, to prove how well it sounded, took the end of the longer pipe, which evidently belonged to Manyalibo, and all of a sudden the forest was filled with the sound of trumpeting elephants. The others clapped their hands with pleasure and said, "You see? Doesn't it sound well?"

My conservative feelings were still wounded, however, and it gave me some pleasure to see the difficulty the Pygmies had on the way back, carrying a fifteen-foot length of drainpipe through the forest. It was pitch dark now, though the moon was full, yet we still followed only the smallest animal trails, this being the quickest route. Frequently Madyadya, carrying the front end of his foster-father's trumpet, turned too sharply, following the trail, so that whoever was carrying the rear end was forced off the path and the trumpet became jammed between two trees. But in spite of these mishaps we returned almost as quickly as we had come.

When we came to the first stream we all stopped. The moonlight was just strong enough for me to see both trumpets laid carefully in the water, then lifted up so that the water ran through from end to end. "The molimo likes to drink," I was told. We washed our feet and continued, but at every stream we came to the performance was repeated, both trumpets being immersed and allowed to "drink." Every now and again, whoever was at the rear end of a trumpet

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long trumpet, with Madyadya holding the front on his shoulder, pointing it over the river toward the camp. Once again the night was shattered as though there were a whole herd of elephants trumpeting shrilly all around us. When the echoes died away, the camp across the river had fallen silent. Ausu blew into the trumpet again, and this time it was as if a leopard were growling angrily nearby. One of the youths clapped himself under the armpit, as Pygmies frequently do, and said to himself, "That is its voice, just exactly." He clapped himself again with delight, and gave a little growl of his own.

Little more than a minute had passed when Amabosu, the great singer, appeared from the shadows below us. He looked at us without saying anything, without smiling or making any greeting. His eyes had the strange look they often took on when he was singing or playing the drums in a dance in the village. They seemed to be seeing something quite different from what was going on in front of them. He went up to Ausu and took the molimo from him and gently filled the forest with strange sounds—the rumblings and growls of buffalos and leopards, the mighty call of the elephant, the plaintive cooing of the dove. Interspersed were snatches of song, transformed by the trumpet into a sound quite unlike the song of men—richer, softer, more distant and unapproachable.

He continued blowing as we moved off, down the slope and to the bank of the river, but when we plunged into the water and waded across, the two trumpets left us and were carried upstream. They growled and bellowed somewhere behind us as we made our way along the path to the camp. In the clearing the men were standing up to see us arrive, and the women were hurrying about doing what they had to do before shutting themselves up in their huts. The voice of the molimo had warned them that it was time to retire. The children had all been chased inside. One by one leaf doors were

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was neither. Everyone ate his fill as and when he pleased, a couple of the older men saying they would wait until the youngsters had finished before they ate. But they did not wait for long. I was told, however, that everyone *had* to eat, just as no adult male was allowed to sleep but *had* to sing while molimo singing was in progress. Apparently one of the greatest crimes that a Pygmy male can commit, if not the greatest, is to be found asleep when the molimo is singing. One of the men stood up, and miming as all Pygmies love to do, he showed how they used to search for sleeping men, a spear under each arm, and how if they found one they would spear him in the stomach and kill him completely and for ever. I was told that then his body would be buried under the kumamolimo and nobody would be allowed to mention his death, even to remark on his absence. The women would be told that the molimo itself, the great animal of the forest, had carried off one of their number, but like the men they would ask no questions and would never again mention the missing man.

The molimo was often referred to as "the animal of the forest," and the women were supposed to believe that it really was an animal, and that to see it would bring death. That of course is why they were all bundled off to bed with the children before the trumpet was ever brought into camp. And even when it *was* brought in it was often shielded by a number of youths so that if any woman should happen to look, she would see nothing. The animal sounds it produced were certainly realistic, but I wondered what the women thought when it sang. What kind of animal was it that one moment could make such threatening sounds, and the next instant sing more beautifully than anything else in the whole forest?

I remembered again Ausu's saying that the only important thing about the trumpet was the fact that it had a good voice and could sing well. I was reminded of the Pygmy legend of the Bird with the Most Beautiful Song. This bird was found by a young boy who

heard such a Beautiful Song that he had to go and see who was singing. When he found the Bird he brought it back to the camp to feed it. His father was annoyed at having to give food to the Bird, but the son pleaded and the Bird was fed. The next day the Bird sang again; it sang the Most Beautiful Song in the Forest, and again the boy went to it and brought it back to feed it. This time the father was even more angered, but once again he gave in and fed the Bird. The third day (most Pygmy stories repeat themselves at least three times) the same thing happened. But this time the father took the Bird from his son and told his son to go away. When his son had left, the father killed the Bird, the Bird with the Most Beautiful Song in the Forest, and with the Bird he killed the Song, and with the Song he killed himself and he dropped dead, completely dead, dead for ever.

There are other legends about song, all telling how important it is, and I wondered just why. I looked at the others sitting with me around the kumamolimo. The flames from the fire flickered, lighting up the serious faces, shining brightly in their large, honest eyes. Some gazed straight into the fire, others leaned back and looked up into the trees as they sang. A few lay down on their hunting nets, but they were awake and they sang with the rest. Then I saw that Makubasi had his infant son on his lap, holding the boy tightly against him, wrapped in his powerful arms, rocking backward and forward. He was singing quietly, with his mouth up against his son's ear. The words of the song, like the words of most molimo songs, were few. They simply said, "The Forest is Good."

The Pygmies seemed bound by few set rules. There was a general pattern of behavior to which everyone more or less conformed, but with great latitude given and taken. Even on this occasion, when all women and children were supposed to be abed, if Makubasi felt like getting his son and singing to him at the kumamolimo, nobody objected or thought anything of it. Possibly this was because the

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each time, at the time, he never brought it up later as an issue for discussion or dispute. One morning, after two brothers, Masalito and Aberi, had been fighting, the "animal of the forest," making more noise than ever, circled all around Masalito's hut and finally pounced on it, beating on the roof and tearing off leaves and sticks. Some of the youths climbed up a tree that overhung the hut and broke off a heavy branch, which fell on the hut, blocking the entrance, but doing no real damage. The couple inside screamed their protests; then there was a sudden silence. Masalito had done the most dreadful thing of all. He had told the youths to take "that animal" away and throw it back in the water and stop all their noise. This spoiled the whole illusion, which is only a pretense in itself, that the women think that the molimo is an animal and do not know that it is a trumpet surrounded by a lot of noisy youths. The silence was followed by cries from all over the camp—cries of shame shouted by both men and women. The "animal" was galvanized into even greater action, and Masalito's hut was in danger of being completely destroyed. Then Njobo came sleepily out into the clearing and told the youths to go away. They had probably had their fill by then anyway, and they left, making a few last defiant noises, some in the direction of Njobo. As soon as they were gone the women came out of their huts, looked around to see how much damage had been done, then went to wash themselves and get breakfast. Children scampered around the irate Masalito as he cleared up the wreckage outside his hut, and as they danced up and down I heard one of them, bolder than the others, give a tiny hoot in imitation of the trumpet. Masalito tried to grab the child but they all ran away, laughing, to torment someone else.

For a month I sat every evening at the kumamolimo; listening, watching, and feeling—above all, feeling. If I still had little idea of what was going on, at least I felt that air of importance and

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expectancy. Every evening, when the women shut themselves up, pretending that they were afraid to see "the animal of the forest"; every evening, when the men gathered around the fire, pretending they thought that the women thought the drainpipes were animals; every evening, when the trumpet drainpipes imitated leopards and elephants and buffalos—every evening, when all this make-believe was going on, I felt that something very real and very great was going on beneath it, something that everyone else took for granted, and about which only I was ignorant.

It was as though the songs which lured the "animal" to the fireside also invoked some other kind of presence. As the evenings wore on toward morning, the songs got more and more serious, and the atmosphere not exactly tense but charged with an emotion powerful enough to send the dancers swirling through the molimo fire as though its flames and red-hot coals held no heat, as though the glowing embers were cold ashes. Yet there was nothing fanatic or frenzied about their action in dancing through the fire. Then there was always that point when the "animal" left the camp and returned to the forest, taking the presence with it. I could feel it departing as the mellow, wistful voice of the molimo got farther and farther away.

The morning rampages carried no such presence with them; they seemed more tangible both in actuality and in purpose. I learned that after these rampages the trumpets were brought back to the Lelo River, just above where the men bathed, and immersed there during the daytime so that the women would not see them. One day there was a terrible storm and the Lelo rose four or five feet, transformed into a torrent. When the rain abated in the late afternoon Madyadya went to look for the trumpets and found that one of them had been washed away. This caused tremendous hilarity, though of course everyone tried to disguise what they were talking about in front of the women. The women, playing the same game, pretended not to

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some convenient branch or tree stump. Sometimes, when hunting, nets have to be set up rapidly, and anyone whose net has become tangled through poor preparation and coiling can spoil the chances of all the others.

The women have little to do by way of preparation for the hunt, other than making sure of the strength of the bark tump line by which they carry their baskets. They put some food in these in case the day's hunt is a long one, and they wrap a glowing ember from the family fire in large, damp leaves, and sit down and wait for the men to set off.

In normal times there is often a dance before everyone departs for the hunt. Men and women circle the camp, singing a hunting song, looking from right to left, clapping their hands and leaping extravagantly in imitation of the animals they hope to catch. But this was rare during the days of the molimo as all felt the lack of rest.

Another form of hunting magic, if you can call it that, was a paste made from various parts of an antelope, particularly the heart and the eye. The charred flesh is mixed with spittle and ground to a paste, then put in an inverted antelope horn and stuck in the ground near the family fire. Just before going on the hunt, members of the family smear one another with some of the paste, using a twig to dig it out of the horn. It is difficult to say whether this form of magic is of Pygmy or Negro origin. I rather think the latter, because only a few families practiced it, and they were highly criticized by the others as being antisocial. They were trying to get success for themselves at the expense of the others. On one such occasion a family had a long run of good luck, the animals always falling into their net, while others had no luck at all. It was decided that this must have been due to *anjo*, as the medicine was called, so everyone, including the offenders, agreed that the only thing to do was to destroy the horns that held the medicine. Everyone who had such a magic horn gave it to old Moke and promised not to make any more

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net, just as Maipe had said, but while all the attention was in that direction a water chevrotain, the *sindula*, had tried to fight its way through Moke's net.

The sindula is one of the most prized animals; it is not much larger than a small dog but is dangerous and vicious. Moke's nephew had been left all by himself to deal with it, as the others in that area were helping Ekianga with the sondu. The youngster, probably not much more than thirteen years old, had speared it with his first thrust, pinning the animal to the ground through the fleshy part of the stomach. But the animal was still very much alive, fighting for freedom. It had already bitten its way through the net, and now it was doubled up, gashing the spear shaft with its sharp teeth. Maipe put another spear into its neck, but it still writhed and fought. Not until a third spear pierced its heart did it give up the struggle.

It was at times like this that I found myself furthest removed from the Pygmies. They stood around in an excited group, pointing at the dying animal and laughing. One boy, about nine years old, threw himself on the ground and curled up in a grotesque heap and imitated the sindula's last convulsions. The men pulled their spears out and joked with one another about being afraid of a little animal like that, and to emphasize his point one of them kicked the torn and bleeding body. Then Maipe's mother came and swept the blood-streaked animal up by its hind legs and threw it over her shoulder into the basket on her back.

At other times I have seen Pygmies singeing feathers off birds that were still alive, explaining that the meat is more tender if death comes slowly. And the hunting dogs, valuable as they are, get kicked around mercilessly from the day they are born to the day they die. I have never seen any attempt at the domestication of any animal or bird apart from the hunting dog. When I talked to the Pygmies about their treatment of animals, they laughed at me and said, "The forest has given us animals for food—should we refuse this gift and

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825 starve?" I thought of turkey farms and Thanksgiving, and of the millions of animals reared by our own society with the sole intention of slaughtering them for food.

224 Ekianga was busy cutting up the sondu by the time I reached his net, for it was too large an animal to fit in his wife's basket. Usually game is brought back to camp before it is divided, and in some groups the dead antelope would have been sent back to camp immediately, around the neck and shoulders of one of the youngsters. But here the womenfolk crowded around as Ekianga hacked away, each claiming her share for her family. "My husband lent you his spear. . . ." "We gave your third wife some liver when she was hungry and you were away. . . ." "My father and yours always hunted side by side. . . ." These were all typical arguments, but for the most part they were not needed. Everyone knew who was entitled to a share, and by and large they stuck to the rules.

224 578 13 Above all the clamor, and in the process of re-coiling the nets and assembling for the next cast, a disgruntled Cephu appeared and complained that he had had no luck. He looked enviously at the sondu and the sindula, but nobody offered him a share. Maipe's mother hurriedly covered the chevrotain with leaves to avoid argument. She worked efficiently, not bothering to take the basket off but using her hands behind her back, and bouncing the basket on her buttocks until the dead animal was completely hidden by the leaves.

We went on for a mile or two and made another cast. Once more Cephu was unlucky, and this time he complained even more loudly, accusing the women of deliberately driving the animals away from his nets. They retorted that he had enough of his own womenfolk there, to which he replied rather ungallantly, "That makes no difference, they are a bunch of lazy empty-heads."

224 123 They were still arguing when they set off for the third cast. I had caught sight of old Moke and stayed behind to talk to him. He

had not left with the hunt but had gone off on his own, as he usually did, with his bow and arrows. I was surprised to see him. He said, "Don't follow them any longer; they will deafen you with their noise. Cephu will spoil the hunt completely—you'll see." He added that he had happened to be nearby, waiting for the animals either to break through the nets or to escape around the edges. He picked up a large civet cat, the skin slightly stained where it had been pierced by an arrow. "Not very good for eating," Moke commented, "but it will make a beautiful hat. Cephu won't get even that—he is too busy watching other people's nets to watch his own. His is a good net to stand behind with bow and arrow!" He chuckled to himself and swung the cat high in the air.

We ambled back slowly, Moke talking away, sometimes to himself and sometimes to me. On the way he stopped to examine some tracks that were fresh, appearing over the tracks made by the hunters earlier on. He announced that they were made by a large male leopard, and that it was probably watching us from "over there"—waving casually to our right with his bow. Then he moved on in his leisurely way, humming to himself.

Back in the camp I was surprised to find that some of the hunters were back already, including Maipe. They had taken a short cut, and traveled twice as fast as Moke and myself. Some of them said it was because rain had threatened, but others, more bluntly, said it was because they did not like the noise Cephu was making. There were a number of women in the camp, and they seemed anxious to change the subject, so Moke told them about the leopard tracks. They laughed and said what a shock the hunters might get if they came back along that trail. One of them started miming the leopard lying in wait, its eyes staring from that side to this. The others formed a line and pretended to be the hunters. Every few steps the "leopard" turned around and jumped up in the air, growling fiercely, sending its pursuers flying to the protection of the trees.

For the next few days we stayed there, and then we moved on from camp to camp, visiting the six or seven hunting groups in the neighborhood. Toward the end we found that we were only a day's march away from Kaweki's fishing camp, and another day would have put us at the Epulu River. So we turned about and slowly made our way back.

Once we had become known to the first group we were accepted wherever we went as a matter of course. Kenge, who had been extremely shy and rather nervous in the Mabudo villages, refusing to eat the food they offered him, was once more his old self. He exploited to the utmost what was for him as well as for our hosts a novel situation. Generally Pygmies travel only within their own area and among groups that they know and in which they have relatives. There was a great deal of curiosity on both sides, but it was mainly concerned with the villagers—what kind of people they were and how easily they were tricked. The Pygmies that we spent the most time with in this region visited the villages only rarely, some of them had never seen a European before, and none of them had met a Pygmy from the other side of the forest. They examined both of us with attention. They pitied me for my height, which made me so clumsy, and they laughed at the hair on my arms and legs, which they said was like that of a monkey. A pink face poking out from behind a beard added to the similarity, and it became a standard joke among them, much to Kenge's annoyance. He felt that it lowered his own status.

For me the trip was mainly work—visiting different groups and taking copious notes about each. But for Kenge it was an experience beyond all imagination. Not only was he able to meet other groups of his fellow BaMbuti, and many different tribes of villagers, but he saw different kinds of Europeans—missionaries, businessmen, movie-makers, "white hunters," and others. We visited the town of Paulis; it was only a small town, but the biggest that Kenge had seen, and

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the movement of his mouth and his eyes and gestures of his hands conveyed what he was saying. As if singing to himself, he said, "I was wrong. This *is* a good place, though I don't like it; it must be good, because there are so many animals. There is no noise of fighting. It is good because the sky is clear and the ground is clean. It is good because I feel good; I feel as though I and the whole world were sleeping and dreaming. Why do people always make so much noise?" And then he added, with infinite wistfulness, "If only there were more trees . . ."

As the sun sank lower we watched the hippopotami playing in the Semliki, directly beneath us. They heaved their great bodies out of the water and opened their gaping mouths wide, snorting and grunting before they sank back beneath the surface with a tremendous splash that sent waves rolling to the shore. Farther down the river two bulls were fighting, but only half in earnest. Soon they all subsided and only the tips of their noses were left poking just above the surface of the water.

Then came a procession of almost every type of animal in the park, one after the other, each picking its way with unhurried grace to the water's edge. On our side of the river they came right past where Kenge and I were sitting, down a narrow path that disappeared from sight beneath us. We next saw them as they emerged at the bottom and carefully waded into the water, looking all around to make sure that there were no rivals near by. As one group of animals moved away, another came and took their place. The elephants that we had passed on the road were the last we saw, and as it was getting dark, we retreated to the safety of the guest houses. We cooked and ate our evening meal in the kitchen, leaving the dining room unused, for there were no other guests in the park.

When we had finished, Henri tried once more to persuade Kenge to go with him to the village, but Kenge refused. Warning us to go straight back to the guest house Henri disappeared, spear in hand,

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

influences of the villagers, particularly witchcraft. The theory was that they would be independent because they would no longer have to rely on the villagers for plantains, rice, peanuts, or other village foods. In point of fact the only thing for which the Pygmies might really be considered to depend on their neighbors was metal for their knife and spear blades. And this was the one thing the model plan for liberation did not teach them to produce or work for themselves.

It may have been coincidence, or it may have been the result of all this talk of Pygmy villages and of the way that elsewhere the forest was being cut down by modern machinery to build new roads, to open up new mines, or to cultivate more coffee, but within a few days what had been a happy-go-lucky camp became silent and depressed. The unhappy Pygmies argued that the more the forest was cut down for roads and mines and foreign plantations, the more would have to be cut down to make more plantations to feed all the laborers. It was not a happy outlook for them. Then, as always happened when they were upset, they began to sing one evening. They sang and sang, and even those who had been sleeping came out to join in.

During a pause between songs, while everyone was silent, we heard quite distinctly the long-drawn-out whistling cry that the Pygmies say comes from the chameleon. There was a shout of delight, and the singing immediately started again, but this time to a quite different tempo. The rhythm was given out by the sharp clapping of two short sticks which Amabosu had quickly cut from a nearby tree. They rang clear and true. The cry of the chameleon and the use of the *ngbengbe* sticks meant only one thing—there was *honey nearby. Within a few days there was not a Pygmy left in* the village.

Of all the many foods in the forest, honey attracts the Pygmies the most strongly. At all times of the year game is to be caught, different kinds of mushrooms and fruits and nuts and berries are to be

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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222 527 517 [533] camp resounded to songs of joy and praise, accompanied by the ringing of the ngbengbe sticks as they were clapped together in complex cross rhythms by boys and girls alike. Every night Masisi told his group, which had steadily grown ever since the beginning, stories about the past. And every night we went to bed content, knowing [825] that the morrow would be even better; for each day we discovered fresh growths of mushrooms, trees full of different kinds of nuts, and each night the chameleon gave its long, sad cry, to tell us that on the morrow we would have more honey.

222 535 517 One night in particular will always live for me, because that night I think I learned just how far away we civilized human beings have drifted from reality. The moon was full, so the dancing had gone on for longer than usual. Just before going to sleep I was standing outside my hut when I heard a curious noise from the nearby children's bopi. This surprised me, because at nighttime the Pygmies generally never set foot outside the main camp. I wandered over to see what it was.

[301] There, in the tiny clearing, splashed with silver, was the sophisticated Kenge, clad in bark cloth, adorned with leaves, with a flower stuck in his hair. He was all alone, dancing around and singing softly to himself as he gazed up at the treetops.

Now Kenge was the biggest flirt for miles, so, after watching a while, I came into the clearing and asked, jokingly, why he was dancing alone. He stopped, turned slowly around and looked at me as though I was the biggest fool he had ever seen; and he was plainly surprised by my stupidity.

[778] [821] "But I'm *not* dancing alone," he said. "I am dancing with the forest, dancing with the moon." Then, with the utmost unconcern, he ignored me and continued his dance of love and life.

621 578 604 224 As the weeks went by, however, a note of dissatisfaction stirred in the camp. Masisi began to complain that the others, including Manyalibo, were way off to the north getting meat, yet they had

224 When they have arrived at the right location, the men set up the nets in a line and stand by to tend them; the women spread out in a circle to beat. Often the pygmies will have dogs which they have borrowed from the Negroes, barkless dogs with wooden bells tied to their collars. Each woman cuts a lot of twigs and makes a little broom with them. She beats the bushes with it, and cries out, "Whoo, whoo, whoo, whoo!" over and over again. The young children, except for the babies which are being carried, are made to keep out of this.

[198] [825] When the women sight an animal and it heads for the nets, they change the tone of their baying; either they identify the kind of animal by this means or indicate that an animal in general is coming. When the animal rushes up to the net and entangles itself, the man who is tending that part of the net grabs the animal and kills it with his knife or spear. He will then beat his hand on his arm pit, and the others will come up to see what he has killed. Sometimes, however, the animal sees the net, or a man moves, and the animal leaps back into the line of women. Such an animal can well escape, for the women are not prepared to stop it. However, when a woman engaged in beating sights a slow animal, such as a turtle, pangolin, porcupine, or even a rat, she will dive for it and pop it into her basket which she carries on her back, and go on beating.

[462] This is merely incidental gathering; slow animals are women's game.

During the course of a single day a pygmy band may set up their nets, conduct a drive, take the nets down, and repeat the process as many as seven times, each time in a different place. If the clouds collect early, they will go home. If there are no clouds and they have a good bag of game, they will still go home, but if it is dry and they

224 mountain of meat and a free lunch for
171 all as long as it remains edible.

222 **Gathering.**—The gathering of fruits, nuts, and slow animals has a minor importance during most of the year, for the bulk of the pygmies' vegetable food derives from the crops of their Negroes. However, after the evening meal, while the men sit about the fires chatting, the women gather firewood and bring in, just before dusk, any mushrooms and slow game that they may encounter.

[221] The dry season, in January and February, is the time of the ripening of certain fruits and seeds. At this time of the year the pygmies easily could live on the fruit borne by the wild forest trees. It is a period of seasonal abundance and feasting. The [137] ibambi, a big luscious fruit that looks like a pineapple, is one of the most important of these fruits. It drops to the ground with a thud, and pygmies and chimpanzees alike will rush up when • [825] they hear it strike. The pygmies often tell stories of chimpanzees that get so full of ibambi that they can eat no more, but hide one in a crotch of a tree for future use; a pygmy sees this and steals it, and the chimpanzee gets a grudge against the pygmy and decides to annoy him in the future.

[137] Next to the ibambi fruit in importance is the baselli nut. This is covered by a tough fibrous husk which can be opened only with a machete; hence, the chimpanzees do not rival the pygmies in this case.

Other gathered foods include termites, which come when the first heavy rains begin after the dry period; colonial caterpillars, which have a later season; and honey.

Pygmy Interaction

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157 **Evening talking time.**—The pyg-
571 mies seem to be a little less talkative
[P.333-B]

4: Putnam E-6 (no date) 1948 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

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group and a stranger in the camp, if it is a different one.

Pygmy Symbolism

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Food tabus.—The pygmy recognizes certain animals as symbols of definite relationships or identifications, in connection with which recognition he observes special food tabus.

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This principle is particularly involved in connection with the animals which represent the clan totems. Each clan has its own private totem animal, which is not, in most cases, actually considered an ancestor. Rather, it has acquired its position because, in the local mythology, an animal of the same species performed some special act of kindness which got one of the clan ancestors out of a perilous situation.

The animals which symbolize clans are always animals which are hunted by men; they are never slow-game animals, which women collect. Vegetable species are never used as totems. The totems are animals which may or may not be caught, about whose capture there is some element of chance, some possibility of crisis, and they are usually food animals, although leopards and chimpanzees, which are off the main dietary line, are totemic animals.

The pygmy will avoid eating the flesh of his own clan totem, but he can eat the flesh of totemic animals of any other clan. However, the pygmy recognizes seven species of antelope, and a dozen of small monkeys; and the clan totem will be, for instance, one species of antelope, rather than all antelopes. Therefore, these tabus do not cause anyone much discomfort, for no one species of these animals accounts for more than a small fraction of the total food supply, and each clan can eat six out of seven kinds of antelope, or eleven out of twelve kinds of monkeys.

[P. 337-8]

825 614 262

Not only does the pygmy avoid eating the flesh of his totemic animal, but he cannot even eat out of any dish or container in which any of its flesh has been cooked; moreover, he avoids the animal itself when he sees it in the forest, and may even flee from it. Carrying the principle of avoidance even further, a pygmy whose totem animal is the chimpanzee will not even eat the berries that are that animal's favorite food.

The breach of any of these tabus is supposed to bring on illness or death, while their observance is, of course, an automatic mechanism to intensify the mutual relations of the members of the clan, who may be scattered through the forest in different bands. As the clan members become more and more distant from each other, as their frequency of relations falls below a certain level, the tabus will break down and the scattered members will take over the prohibitions of the people among whom they live and with whom they have in time come to identify themselves.

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Besides the clan food tabus, there are sex tabus, condition tabus, and personal tabus. The sex tabus serve to symbolize the difference in activities between men and women. Women and

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children will eat frogs and toads, but men refuse to touch them. These amphibians probably symbolize water, and hence storms, and since it is the men who do the hunting they are the ones who are peculiarly vulnerable to storms.

784 264 [171]

The condition tabus are the same type as those described by A. R. Brown in *The Andaman Islanders*. A pygmy going through the puberty period, pregnancy, mourning, or any other crisis in the life cycle will abstain from certain foods, and the animals concerned are thus symbols of this critical situation.

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The personal tabus involve simply the refusal of an individual to eat certain

262 foods. This may be due to a recognized allergy, to some unpleasant association, or to any one of a number of causes. The animals involved in these tabus include porcupines, snakes, and other slow game not found among the clan totems.

825 The animals of the forest, which symbolize clans, sexes, and individual and conditional idiosyncrasies, are very real people to the pygmies. In the old days, the mythical time, they could all talk and were on an even footing with men. Each species was symbolized by one individual, who was given an honorific name, as Mr. Turtle, Mr. Gray Antelope, or Mr. Chimpanzee. Mr. Turtle was a very wise and tricky individual, and the smallest antelope of all was King of the Beasts. The pygmies and their Negro hosts have an elaborate folklore about these animals and all their doings which might shed considerable light on their human relations.

821 **Ritual symbols.**—To the pygmies, water, rain, storm, thunder, lightning, snakes, and rainbows are all parts of a single symbolic configuration. The elements of this configuration, of course, represent the sudden rainstorms which arise without warning in the afternoons and sometimes, rarely, in the mornings as well. These may prevent hunting; flood huts; cause dead limbs to fall, crushing huts and killing people; or occasionally kill them by bolts of lightning. No other element in their life causes so much disturbance or upsets them so profoundly.

816 [811] Both pygmies and Negroes believe in a *Nyama ya mai* (Swahili) or water animal, who lurks in streams and plays dangerous tricks on people. Sometimes he tips canoes over; sometimes he will grab the ankle of a woman fording a stream, so that she slips, and may even drown. If any serious mishap occurs in or in connection with the